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ABSTRACT

Using the conceptual framework outlined in "Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century," a 1988 report of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, this guidebook explores eight phases in the development and implementation of a strategic plan. Chapter I provides an overview of the planning process and the essential elements and conditions of strategic planning. Chapter II discusses organizational and logistical issues in the "planning to plan" phase, focusing on the planning council, staff support for planning, the role of the governing board, and the use of outside consultants. In chapter III, methods for reviewing and clarifying the college's mission are explored. Chapter IV looks at the process of articulating the values shared by the college and its community, and chapter V presents different approaches to environmental and institutional scanning. Chapters VI and VII explain the processes of identifying strategic issues and formulating the strategic plan. After a discussion in chapter VIII concerning the presentation, approval, endorsement, and dissemination of the strategic plan, chapter IX considers the implementation and follow-up phases and ways of linking strategy to operations and resources. Each of the chapters dealing with particular phases of the strategic planning process concludes with a list of suggested activities and resources. The final chapter presents a guide for discussion and evaluation of the goal of building communities. Appendixes include a self-assessment instrument and Owensboro Community College's (KY) strategic plan, which was developed using the eight-phase process presented in the guidebook. (WP)

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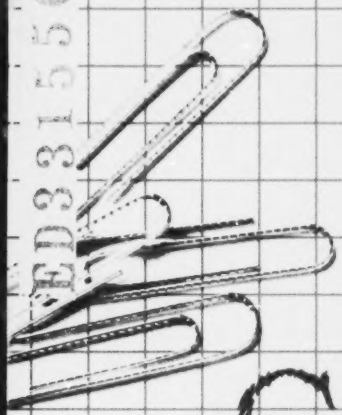

# BUILDING COMMUNITIES THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING

## A GUIDEBOOK FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by Kay McClenney, Nancy Armes LeCroy, and R. Jan LeCroy

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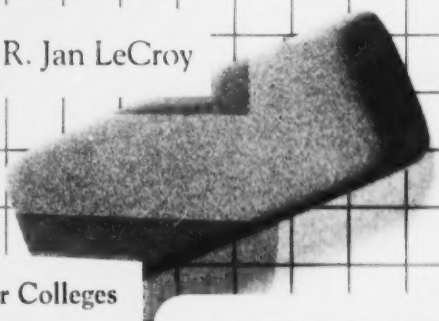

American Association of Community and Junior Colleges

National Center for Higher Education
One Dupont Circle N.W., Suite 410 · Washington, D.C. 20036-1176
(202) 728-0200

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# PREFACE

In late 1988, the Citizens Committee on Education of Owensboro, Kentucky, an organization of concerned and committed community leaders, obtained a grant from the BellSouth Foundation for the purpose of developing a strategic plan for the educational development of Owensboro Community College and the communities it serves.

To guide this effort, a three-member consultant team was retained to design and facilitate the planning process over a six-month period. Throughout the process, the consultants worked with and through a 22-member Planning Council composed of 10 representatives from the college faculty, staff, and administration and 12 community representatives from Owensboro and the surrounding region. Since the new college had come into being because of the keen interest and involvement of the community and its leaders, it was possible for this planning process to be a true collaborative undertaking between the community and the college.

The Committee determined that an ideal framework for this strategic planning would be the 1988 report of the AACJC Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, *Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century*. That document, because of its emphasis on building strong collaboration between the college and the community, seemed ideally suited as a framework for planning, both in its major themes and in its more specific areas of recommendation. Thus the Owensboro Community College Strategic Plan focuses on seven areas that parallel the Futures Commission report: students and faculty, curriculum, instruction, campus community, community partnerships, assessment, and leadership. The strategic plan, which was completed in April 1989 and has been shared widely within the college and the community, is a useful companion piece to this document and is included here as Appendix II.

Through the foresight of BellSouth in its original grant specifications, this guidebook hones in on the planning process itself, precisely because we believed the process would be a useful model for other colleges seeking to plan strategically in ways that incorporate the community. Because it is often difficult, in the press of ongoing college life, to find the time and resources to develop a unique process, this guidebook will provide a model for planning that has been tested, deemed worthy of replication, and demonstrated to be effective.

Following an introductory chapter on strategic planning, the guidebook addresses each phase in the planning process (Chapters II through VIII). Chapter IX suggests ways to link strategy to college operations and resource allocation. And finally, returning the focus to the pervasive concern for building a sense of community, Chapter X provides a "Guide for Discussion and Evaluation."

Appendix I presents an "Institutional Self-Assessment Instrument," originally developed for use in AACJC-sponsored campus team workshops. This instrument lists all the recommendations set forth in the *Building Communities* report. The format allows an institution to evaluate its current status in relation to each of those recommendations.

The Citizens Committee is indebted in particular to the BellSouth Foundation for its foresight in emphasizing the collaborative nature of college-community planning and development and the need for replicability. We wish to acknowledge AACJC and the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges for their leadership in providing the seminal *Building Communities* report. We are indebted to the chancellor of Kentucky's community colleges and his staff for their interest in and support of the planning effort. We were also greatly aided by the Citizens Committee for Education and its executive director and mayor of Owensboro, Kentucky, David Adkisson. Many others deserve thanks, especially the faculty, staff, administration, and students of Owensboro Community College and the citizens of its community.

— Kay McClenney
— Nancy Armes LeCroy
— R. Jan LeCroy

# I. COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING: A COLLEGE/COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

In a community college where there exists a determination to *build communities* while envisioning and pursuing a desired future, strategic planning can be an immensely useful process. Provided below are (1) a brief overview of the planning process, which will be further explicated in succeeding chapters of this guidebook; (2) a review of the concept of strategic planning; and (3) a brief discussion of conditions seen as requisite to effective planning.

## Overview of the Planning Process

Using *Building Communities* as the theme for both planning process and planning product, the process set forth in this guidebook takes the college and the community through several phases in the development of a strategic plan (see Figure 1). This process includes:

Phase I: Planning to Plan: Organizational and Logistical Issues
Phase II: The College Mission: Review and Clarification
Phase III: Articulating Shared Values: The College and its Community
Phase IV: Environmental and Institutional Scanning
Phase V: Identification of Strategic Issues
Phase VI: Formulation of the Strategic Plan
Phase VII: Presentation, Approval, and Dissemination
Phase VIII: Implementation and Follow-Up: Linking Strategy to Operations and Resources

In subsequent chapters, each phase of the process will be described. In most chapters, the narrative is followed by an assortment of planning activities and exercises that may be selected and tailored to fit the needs of a particular community college.

### The Community Building Emphasis

As noted above, the planning process described here encompasses a number of elements generic to strategic planning: mission review, values clarification, environmental scanning, institutional assessment, definition of strategic issues, and formulation of strategic goals. The described process is unique, however, in its emphasis on the *building of communities*, both internally and externally. Consistent with the central message of the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, we define *community* "not only as a region to be served, but also as a climate to be created." Linked with a model for strategic planning, then, community building is considered not only a desired outcome of plan implementation, but also a central concern in the design of the process itself. Thus, the planning activities and exercises suggested here emphasize the nurturing or development of those qualities and capacities that characterize community: a concern for the whole, for integration and collaboration, for openness and integrity, and for inclusiveness and self-renewal.

Further distinguishing this model from the more typical strategic planning process in higher education is the very strong emphasis on dialogue and partnership between the community college and the broader



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community that it exists to serve. The fostering of two-way communication, the articulation of college and community values, the honest acknowledgment of tensions and diverse perspectives, the delineation of mutual goals, the nurturing of linkages and collaboration, the affirmation of multipartite commitments — all these elements are seen as essential to a strategic plan that promotes not just a single community college, but the overall educational development of the community. Institutional planning often becomes a process whereby the college simply "talks to itself" about its future; by contrast, this model represents an effort to promote and sustain a dynamic listening- planning- acting partnership between the institution and its community.

## Elements of Strategic Planning

The goal of strategic planning is not primarily the production of plans — that is, planning documents. Rather, the process might more appropriately be described as a series of critical decisions that cumulatively shape the future of the community college. Central to the process is the development of a good "match" among the demands and opportunities presented by the external environment, the internal characteristics and values of the organization, and organizational resources. Ideally, the planning process is seen as continuous rather than periodic, flexible rather than rigid, dynamic rather than static, intuitive as well as rational. Given rapidly changing conditions, strategic planning tends to focus on short- to intermediate-term priorities more than on the long-range goals once typical of educational planning.

Effective strategic planning is not merely a management exercise, not a responsibility that can be fully delegated to a single administrator or even to a committee, not a task that is ever entirely finished. It is, at its best, a way of thinking, a way of deciding, a way of constantly positioning the institution in relation to its external environment, a way of approaching the overall leadership, direction-setting, and policy-making functions of the future-oriented community college.

## Essential Conditions

Both the professional literature and practical experience point to certain conditions which are essential to successful planning efforts. Included are the following:

### Leadership Commitment

There must be strong, visible, and audible commitment by top-level college leaders, especially the chief executive officer (CEO), to the planning process, to the implementation of plans, and to the evaluation of results. While that commitment may be expressed in many ways, it is best demonstrated behaviorally, with decisions, actions, and resource allocations being clearly based on defined strategic priorities.

### Understanding of Mission

The cornerstone for effective planning is a clear understanding of institutional mission. The essential purposes of the organization must be explicitly stated, with the understanding that the strategies, plans, activities, and resources of the college are to be directed at fulfillment of those purposes. It is also crucial that commitment to the mission be shared across all segments of the college community.

### Broad Participation by Constituent Groups

Effective planning requires that opportunities be provided for meaningful involvement of the people who are 'stakeholders" in the process and its outcomes. Participation by faculty, students, staff, administrators, and representatives of key community constituencies in the development of plans serves two important purposes: first, the contributions of diverse perspectives and expertise tend to enhance the quality of decisions reached, and second, people involved in formulating plans are more likely to be committed to their implementation.

## Clarification and Communication of Vision

A central task in strategic planning is the creation of a shared vision for the future of the institution, with particular emphasis on the dynamic relationships between the college and its external community. Given the strong external orientation that typifies successful strategic planning, there must be understanding of and commitment to the vision in the community as well as within the college itself.

## Integration with the Mainstream of Institutional Decision Making

When seen as somehow detached from other major institutional processes such as budgeting, program review, personnel decisions, faculty development, and student assessment, planning will have little impact on the college. Considerable effort must therefore be devoted to the use of assessment and evaluation information in the development of plans, the translation of strategies into daily operations, decisions, and activities, and the creation of demonstrable linkages between plans and the allocation of institutional resources, including not only budget dollars, but also time, energy, space, equipment, and personnel.

## Establishment of Clear Priorities

Effective planning requires the explicit identification of priorities at each level of the institution and for the institution as a whole. Priority setting is easy to talk about and difficult to do, requiring both will and skill. But the establishment of clear priorities is the key factor in successfully implementing strategic plans and in linking plans to budgets.

## Simplicity

In any organization — but perhaps especially in the community college — the success of a planning initiative will require purposeful and continuous efforts to keep the process as simple and short as possible. Planning periods should be brief but intense, deadlines should be reasonable but firm, the length of written documents should be stringently limited, and the proliferation of rules, procedures, forms, and data should be rigorously controlled.

## Action Orientation

Finally, the effectiveness of a planning effort ultimately will depend on the collective determination to *act*. The real test of a plan is in its implementation. If there is a serious intent to promote positive change, to shape the institution's future, and to build communities, then individuals and groups must move beyond thinking and talking to choosing, deciding, and acting. As Peter Drucker asserts, "The best plan is *only* a plan — that is, good intentions — unless it *degenerates into work*."

Figure 1

# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

**Phase I: Planning to Plan**
- Evaluate current process
- Define procedures, schedule, and responsibilities
- Provide for broad-based involvement
- Collect and share available information

**Phase II: Mission Review and Clarification**
- Describe essential functions
- Explicate desired outcomes for students and community
- Define role in building communities

**Phase III: Articulation of Shared Values**
- Identify college and community values
- Express aspirations and honor tensions

**Phase IV: Environmental and Institutional Scanning**
- Analyze environmental forces and factors
- Assess institutional strengths and weaknesses
- Anticipate financial resources and constraints
- Identify opportunities and barriers

**Phase V: Identification of Strategic Issues**
- Potential decision areas related to building communities:
  students, faculty, curriculum, instruction, campus community, community partnerships, leadership, assessment
- Sort information/ perspectives to focus attention
- Identify, evaluate, and select action alternatives

**Phase VI: Formulation of Strategic Plan**
- Describe desired directions and responsibilities

**Phase VII: Presentation, Approval, and Dissemination of Strategic Plan**
- Provide for review, discussion, and response
- Seek formal approval and distribute widely

**Phase VIII: Implemetation and Follow-Up**
- Establish priorities for implementation
- Link identified priorities to operations and resources
- Periodically evaluate progress
- Annually update strategic plan

# II. PLANNING TO PLAN: ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL ISSUES

As the community college undertakes the design and implementation of a strategic planning process, there are a number of key organizational tasks and considerations. These include the evaluation of previous or current planning activities; the need to provide for broad-based involvement, leadership, and staff support; the definition of specific procedures, timelines, and responsibilities for planning; the collection and sharing of available information that may provide a starting point for planning; and the effective integration of the planning process into the ongoing life of the institution.

Integral to the planning process described in this guidebook is an assessment of the institution's current status in regard to the recommendations set forth in *Building Communities* (see Appendix I), the report of the AACJC Commission on the Future of Community Colleges. Furthermore, the planning process and the planning document itself are organized around the seven focal areas in the Commission's report: students and faculty, curriculum, instruction, campus community, community partnerships, assessment, and leadership. Community building can be accomplished by providing a variety of opportunities for involvement of constituent groups of the college and the community, such as interviews, workshops, briefings, formal hearings, focus groups, retreats, feedback exercises, and so on. The model also suggests a central role for a "planning council," a steering group composed of representatives of constituent groups.

In the narrative and resource materials of this chapter, we provide general guidance regarding the organization and logistics of planning. Clearly, however, there exists no universally "ideal" planning process. Rather, each institution should tailor this (or any) model to fit the unique circumstances, characteristics, and values of the college and its community.

## The Planning Council

The Planning Council serves in an advisory capacity to broaden the base of involvement, information, and perspective in planning for the future. Intended outcomes of the Council's work may include the identification of strategic recommendations for the college in relating to its service region and for the region in relating to its community college. In both its deliberations and in formulation of recommendations, the Planning Council will continually seek ways to build communities, both within the college and in the broader community. More specific responsibilities of the Council are to:

- Actively promote in the college and the community broad awareness of and involvement in the planning process, including representing viewpoints of colleagues and fellow citizens and sharing information with them about opportunities for "input," the work of the Planning Council, key issues addressed, and so on
- Participate in the work of one or more subcommittees of the Planning Council
- Review subcommittee recommendations and provide direction in the overall development of the strategic plan

### Subcommittee Responsibilities

To accomplish its tasks, the Planning Council may choose to organize itself into a number of smaller work groups or subcommittees. Those subcommittees may be assigned responsibility for specific issues or areas of concern. For example, following the organization of the *Building Communities* report, there might be subcommittees to deal with curriculum, community partnerships, leadership, and so on. Responsibilities of the subcommittees would typically include the following:

- Monitor discussions in the Planning Council and other settings for issues, ideas, and recommendations pertaining to a specific assigned area of responsibility.
- Identify individuals in the college or community who have special knowledge or experience related to

the area of subcommittee responsibility. If appropriate, invite additional individuals to either join the subcommittee as regular participants (total membership should probably not exceed four to six) or "brief" the subcommittee regarding their area(s) of expertise.

- Identify and review information resources (e.g., existing community or college reports or studies) pertinent to the subcommittee's area of responsibility.
- Assist in planning and facilitating a focus group meeting highlighting strategic issues, opportunities, and priorities relating to the subcommittee's area of responsibility, and summarize focus group proceedings.
- Review, sort, and succinctly summarize the most salient information (from all sources) pertaining to the area of responsibility.
- Provide by a stipulated deadline the subcommittee's draft recommendations regarding planning assumptions, strategic issues, and strategic recommendations related to the area of responsibility.

**Membership of the Planning Council**

The Planning Council needs to be large enough to represent a majority of the criteria spelled out under the decision rules listed below. Because of the complexity of community college realities and the importance of hearing from significant contingents within the college and the community, the full Planning Council can number 20 or slightly more. Such a number, though large, is workable, especially since Council members will have a number of opportunities to work in both small subcommittees and focus groups. If the number grows much larger, there is a strong likelihood that the Planning Council will not coalesce as a decision-making group. Ideally, the Council should also have roughly equivalent numbers of college and community leaders.

The following decision rules can be used to select people from the college for the Council:

- Are strong formal and informal leaders represented?
- Is there significant faculty membership (50 percent or more)?
- Are there representatives from all employee groups?
- Are there representatives from major segments of college life: instruction, student services, continuing education, business services, and so on?
- Is the chief academic officer a member?
- Are planning, research, and institutional effectiveness expertise represented?
- Is there representation from the faculty senate and/or collective bargaining units (when applicable)?
- Are there representatives who can promote coordination of planning with other major efforts (e.g., accreditation, assessment, and professional development) when appropriate?

The following decision rules can be used to select people from the community for the Council:

- Are college governing board members represented?
- Are influential community leaders included?
- Are geographic service areas represented?
- Are key segments of community life represented?
- Are underrepresented populations (e.g., minorities, women, disadvantaged people, and handicapped people) included?
- Are members included who understand broad-based social issues?
- Are leaders included who understand community college realities?

As the planning process becomes integrated into the annual cycle of college life, it is useful to rotate Planning Council membership (e.g., through three-year staggered terms) both to preserve continuity and to bring fresh ideas and representation into the process.

### Leadership of the Planning Council

Initially, the Planning Council needs to be prepared for and committed to an intensive four- to six-month planning process. The full group should meet at least monthly, with subcommittee and focus-group work adding additional responsibilities during certain phases of the project.

The leadership of the Council is pivotal. Co-chairs are ideal, and there are two options for appointing co-chairs: one co-chair from the college and one from the community, or one co-chair being a top-level administrator and one a faculty leader. There are enough tasks to keep these co-chairs busy, and such an arrangement prevents any one person from experiencing undue constraints from the assignment. As much as possible, it is a good idea to relieve college members from other committee assignments during the planning process.

Under the direction and leadership of these co-chairs, the Planning Council as a whole needs time to get to know one another, with regular opportunity for interaction. Members will need prompt communication and feedback that includes frequent updates on progress.

## Staff Support for Planning

During the Planning Council's work, adequate staff support will be crucial. This includes both secretarial support and staff facilitation. Gathering resources, providing information, summarizing material, keeping up with timelines, and arranging for logistical support will all be necessary duties. It is unrealistic to expect that either members of the Planning Council or the co-chairs can undertake their own leadership assignments without staff support. During the planning process, staff support might amount to a day a week for two individuals. Recommended elements of such support include:

- Secretarial support by one person who has been instructed to give priority to the assignment.
- One internal professional staff member who monitors the planning process and communicates with key parties, ensures that timelines are adhered to, and responds to collective and individual requests of the Planning Council. For continuity's sake, it is ideal if such responsibilities can reside with a single person. This staff person needs excellent communication skills, including the ability to synthesize material and draft documents, and he or she needs clear, regular access to Planning Council leadership and to the college CEO.
- Adequate resources for these staff.

## Role of the Governing Board

Strategic planning is a significant policy-making and direction-setting activity of the community college. As such, it is also an endeavor in which the governing board of the institution should be involved. The manner and extent of governing board involvement may vary widely, in accord with the overall governance structure of the institution, the board's interest and expertise, its committee structure, its ties to the local community, and so on. For example, the board may assume a strong initiating role in planning (i.e., approving process design, identifying issues, and so on, perhaps in a planning retreat). Alternatively, board members may participate in the process itself, as a "committee of the whole," through a board planning committee, or through designated representatives appointed to the Planning Council. At the minimum, the board should actively monitor the process, receiving frequent progress reports, responding to position papers and draft documents, and so forth. And because the completed strategic plan serves as a policy statement, providing direction for future operations and resource allocations, the final draft should be presented for governing board approval.

## Use of Outside Consultants

As the planning process gets underway, a determination needs to be made about the possible use of external consultants. If adequate internal staff resources are available with the skills, time, and willingness to perform the facilitation role, that may be ideal. Certainly resource constraints, the timing of the project, and the needs of the institution need to be taken into account in such decisions.

However, external consultants may have particular value in the following situations: when there are tensions in the college or the community, when collective bargaining deliberations are particularly volatile or prominent, when the institution is confronting particularly complex issues in relation to its community, when there is likelihood that consensus will be difficult, when the institution itself is very large or complex, and when there is new leadership.

External consultants bring fresh perspectives that are often more objective or broad-based. If they assume a significant amount of the staff support functions (e.g., in setting forth tasks, interviewing, drafting documents, or bringing discussion to closure) they can keep the planning process from unduly encumbering college staff. Furthermore, using outside consultants can free the Planning Council to concentrate in a more focused way on the deliberations and recommendations to be developed.

The effective use of external consultants depends on a clear definition of their role. In particular, it is important that consultants' contributions be primarily facilitative (i.e., enabling college and community to plan efficiently and effectively) rather than prescriptive (i.e., stipulating the plan), so that local ownership of the process and the plan is ensured.

## Suggested Activities and Resources

In the following pages we offer selected materials that may be useful as the college "plans to plan." Below are brief notes regarding the intended uses of those materials.

**Subcommittee Worksheet: Initial Organization**

This worksheet (or a modified version) may help Planning Council subcommittees organize their approach to their assigned tasks.

**Planning Process Activities and Timelines**

The timeline offered here is purposely "generic" and would need to be augmented in a particular college setting with specific dates, deadlines, activities, and responsibilities.

**Planning Activity Worksheet**

As the Planning Council considers and selects particular approaches for gathering information and promoting broad-based involvement (e.g., campus retreat, community interviews, or a public hearing), this worksheet may provide guidance in activity planning.

# Subcommittee Worksheet: Initial Organization

**Subcommittee:**

( ) Students and Faculty ( ) Curriculum
( ) Instruction ( ) Assessment ( ) Community Partnerships
( ) Leadership

**Involvement Needed:**

What groups/constituencies within the college and/or the community should be involved in planning in this area?

Who (from the college or the community) should be invited immediately to join this subcommittee as a regular participant?

Who (from the college or the community) should be invited to brief the subcommittee on issues, information, or viewpoints pertinent to this area of responsibility?

In addition to individual briefings that may be scheduled by the subcommittee, what other opportunities should be provided for "input" from the college and community (e.g., focus group, a questionnaire, or brown-bag discussion)?

**Information Resources :**

What available college or community studies, reports, or documents provide pertinent background or direction for planning in this area? Who will obtain them for review by the subcommittee?

What information that is not currently available might be especially useful to support planning in this area? Who is in the best position to obtain and present that information?



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# Planning Process Activities and Timeline

| | |
|---|---|
| **Phase I:** | **Planning to Plan** |
| pre-planning | Designation of planning coordinator/facilitator |
| | Appointment of Planning Council |
| | Selection of consultant(s), if any |
| | Planning Council orientation workshop |
| | Assessment of current planning efforts |
| | Inventory and review of available information |
| | Determination of need for mission review and values clarification |
| | Design of process, including schedule/timeline |
| **Phase II:** | **Mission Review and Clarification** |
| pre-planning | Planning Council meetings |
| | Public/campus forums, surveys, etc. |
| | Formal approval of values statement |
| **Phase III:** | **Articulation of Shared Values** |
| pre-planning | Planning Council meetings |
| | College retreat, interviews, focus groups, etc. |
| | Written exercises, draft document, feedback |
| | Formal approval |
| **Phase IV:** | **Environmental and Institutional Scanning** |
| week 1-week 4 | Planning Council meetings (weekly) |
| | Structured interviews with college faculty, staff, students, and administrators |
| | Structured interviews with community leaders |
| | Summaries of interview findings |
| | Planning Council and/or subcommittee work on gathering and discussing information through review of available research, additional interviews, briefing sessions, position papers, focus groups, campus forums, surveys, etc. |
| **Phase V:** | **Identification of Strategic Issues** |
| week 5-week 6 | Subcommittee work sessions to (1) synthesize available information, including input from focus groups and other sources, and (2) produce position papers incorporating draft recommendations on planning assumptions, strategic issues, and strategic recommendations pertaining to subcommittee area |
| | Deadline for receipt of subcommittee draft documents for review prior to next Planning Council meeting |
| | Planning Council workshop |
| | Synthesis and summary of deliberations and decisions; solicitation of feedback |
| **Phase VI:** | **Formulation of Strategic Plan** |
| week 7 | Initial draft of strategic plan; copies distributed to Planning Council |
| week 8 | Written feedback from Planning Council members on strategic plan; meeting for discussion |
| week 9 | Revised draft of strategic plan |
| week 10 | Planning Council review and approval |
| | CEO review and approval |
| **Phase VII:** | **Presentation, Approval, and Dissemination of Strategic Plan** |
| week 11 | Public presentation of strategic plan draft |
| week 12 | Revisions, if desirable |
| | Governing board approval, if applicable |
| | Publication and dissemination |
| **Phase VIII:** | **Implementation and Follow-Up** |
| | Continuous |

# Planning Activity Worksheet

PROPOSED PLANNING ACTIVITY: _____

TOPIC/FOCUS: _____

PARTICIPANTS/TARGET AUDIENCE: _____

TIMEFRAME: _____ LOCATION: _____

RESOURCES: (Existing) (New)

Logistics: _____ _____

_____ _____

Expertise: _____ _____

_____ _____

Information/Research: _____ _____

_____ _____

Financial: _____ _____

PEOPLE TO INVOLVE:

In activity planning: _____

_____

In actual activity: _____

_____

EXPECTED RESULTS: _____

_____

POTENTIAL FOLLOW-UP TO THIS ACTIVITY: _____

_____

COMMUNITY-BUILDING STRATEGIES/PROCESS
INCORPORATED IN THIS ACTIVITY: _____

_____

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTIVITY: _____

PROGRESS REPORT DATE: _____

NOTES:

# III. THE COLLEGE MISSION: REVIEW AND CLARIFICATION

The anchor for strategic planning is provided by the institution's mission statement. Thus, an early task in the planning process is the development or review of that statement. It should be noted that the environmental and institutional assessment undertaken in strategic planning may occasionally result in a determination that the mission should be revised. Thus, while the mission statement provides direction for planning, the planning process may in turn affect the mission.

To re-examine the mission is to pose some basic questions about institutional purposes and desired outcomes such as: Why should we exist? What are our most essential functions? What do we do differently from— or better than—the competition? What should our students know and be able to do when they complete or graduate? For what are we willing to be accountable?

Traditionally, the college mission statement provides information about the institution's history, affiliation, service area, clientele, admissions policy, and major functions. A strong statement will also capture the colleges' relationship to its community, its essential values, and its aspirations regarding the outcomes of students' educational experiences. By clearly describing itself, the college establishes not only the basis for further planning efforts, but also the fundamental criteria for evaluation of institutional effectiveness.

Mission review may result in the affirmation of existing documents, in slight modifications, or in development of an entirely new statement. If the college has not recently undertaken such a review, and especially if major changes are proposed, a draft version should be widely distributed for discussion. Because of the significance of the mission statement, the final draft should be submitted for approval by the governing board.

## Suggested Activities and Resources

Provided on the following pages are selected materials that may be useful in the process of mission review. Below are brief notes regarding the intended use of these materials.

**Focusing on Mission: Prior Questions to be Considered**

For the college to be clearly focused, certain fundamental questions may need to be considered before more specific programmatic and planning matters are addressed. Intended to stimulate thoughtful campus discussion, this piece suggests a number of "prior questions" related to the community college mission.

**Mission Statement Checklist**

After substantive review and discussion of all major aspects of the college mission, the existing or new mission statement should accurately reflect these deliberations and the conclusions reached. This instrument, suggesting a number of review questions related to the mission statement, might be used to stimulate discussion and to elicit feedback from campus and community constituents.

**Statements of Expectations**

Following review and affirmation of the college mission statement, it may be valuable to undertake discussions that seek to define expectations held by and for key groups of people, both on campus and beyond. At the heart of this exercise is the question, "If we are indeed to pursue and fulfill our mission, how must each of us and all of us contribute to that effort?"

# Focusing on Mission: Prior Questions to be Considered

IS OUR COLLEGE A TRUE COMMUNITY OF LEARNING?

- Do faculty and staff have a strong identification with the college?
- Do classroom experiences create a community for students?
- Are part-time faculty, staff, and students significantly tied to college life?
- Is there unnecessary divisiveness, perhaps a pecking order in college life, that discourages connectedness?
- Is there collaboration across the college in a number of areas and at a number of levels?

CAN OUR COLLEGE DEMONSTRATE THAT WE ARE COMMITTED TO AND EXCELLENT AT TEACHING?

- Are faculty provided training and resources to effectively teach underprepared students?
- Do faculty incorporate teaching strategies demonstrated to be effective with nontraditional students?
- Are preservice and inservice professional development targeted to improve teaching?
- Is evidence gathered to document teaching effectiveness?
- Is faculty evaluation clearly tied to student success in the classroom?

HAS OUR COLLEGE CLEARLY ARTICULATED ITS PRIORITIES AND THOUGHTFULLY PURSUED NEW CHALLENGES?

- Have program priorities been clearly established?
- Is there a process in place for deciding on new initiatives?
- Are budget decisions clearly tied to institutional priorities?
- Are existing programs regularly evaluated?
- Are programs terminated as well as added?
- Are there institutional symptoms of being spread too thin, such as deferred maintenance, increased reliance on part-time faculty, or a declining percentage of budget allocated to classroom instruction?

IS OUR COLLEGE BOUND BY UNREALISTIC SYSTEMS, TRADITIONS, OR PATTERNS THAT DO NOT REFLECT EITHER THE COMPLEXITY OF THE MISSION OR THE DIVERSITY OF THE STUDENTS TO BE SERVED?

- Do we provide the same quality of service to evening and off-campus students as to daytime on-campus students?
- Do we gear schedules, programs, and services to part-time student realities?
- Do our student support systems take into account the needs of adult students (such as child care, financial aid, and tutoring)?
- Do we create an environment in which students are likely to return to us again and again as life-long learners?

DOES OUR COLLEGE ADEQUATELY SUPPORT AND ENHANCE OUR TWO CORE MISSIONS, TRANSFER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION?

- Do we have a truly exemplary general education program that is more than a distribution of courses?
- Are technical/vocational programs current, effectively preparing students for entry-level work force positions?
- Do we adequately address basic literacy, critical thinking, human relations skills, and responsibility in our degree programs?
- Are our programs in their design and sequencing clearly designed to give our students future options in both academic pursuits and the work force?



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AS A "FILL-IN-THE-GAP" INSTITUTION, DOES OUR COMMUNITY COLLEGE COLLABORATE SUCCESSFULLY TO ELIMINATE TRADITIONAL DICHOTOMIES BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY?

- Have successful interdisciplinary programs become institutionalized?
- Have cooperative arrangements been developed with educational institutions in both the public school sector and higher education?
- Have cooperative arrangements with other community agencies made it possible to refer those students that cannot be adequately served?
- Have substantive relationships with business and industry been established to ensure program currency?

# Mission Statement Checklist

| REVIEW QUESTIONS | COMMENTS |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Is the mission statement inclusive? | |
| • Does it cover all significant aspects of organizational life? | |
| • Does it sufficiently differentiate the college from other institutions? | |
| 2. Is the mission statement clear? | |
| • Is it stated in language that all constituents can understand? | |
| • Does it avoid jargon and cloudy rhetoric? | |
| 3. Is the mission statement realistic? | |
| • Does it indicate aspirations that can be accomplished? | |
| • Can progress be adequately defined and assessed? | |
| • Does it indicate elements that can be measured? | |
| 4. Are these items for which the college wishes to be held accountable? | |
| 5. Are there other aspirations, expectations, goals, and/or values that need to be included? | |



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# Statement of Expectations

(For Students, Faculty, Administrators, Staff, and Community)

In response to the college mission statement, and in order to promote the achievement of that mission, the students seek to:

The faculty members seek to:

The administrators seek to:

The staff members seek to:

The community seeks to:

# IV. ARTICULATING SHARED VALUES: THE COLLEGE AND ITS COMMUNITY

*Building Communities* defines community "not only as a region to be served, but also a climate to be created." Such a definitional statement makes clear the inherently value-laden issues facing a community college intent on building community. In its broadest and best sense, this interest encompasses a concern for the whole, for integration and collaboration, for openness and integrity, for inclusiveness and self-renewal.

For a community college to successfully incorporate these concerns in its strategic planning process, it must define, clarify, and secure commitment to core values for the institution. Ideally, representative leaders of the external community, specifically members of the Planning Council, should be included in this process of establishing core values.

This section of the guidebook sets forth a series of exercises and activities for defining and clarifying organizational values. The obvious place to begin is by asking definitional questions designed to elicit the values and beliefs of the college and community. Fundamentally, the intent is to discover — through these interviews, in small groups, and through various other feedback mechanisms — what college and community members want the college to be and how they want various constituents to be treated in the educational process. During these definitional exercises, the college also needs to constantly wrestle with how it can more nearly adhere to the values it sets forth as important.

A final step is to develop a draft values statement, relying on responses and feedback drawn from the various exercises. Opportunities for both written and oral feedback should be provided. Ideally, such a statement is brief, specific, and inspirational. The form, structure, and style it takes should reflect, as much as possible, the unique identity of the college and its relationship to the community.

## Suggested Activities and Resources

Provided in the following pages are selected exercises, activities, and assessments for defining and clarifying college and community values. These activities should complement other elements within the planning process and include several iterative opportunities to define, redefine, clarify, and thus internalize these values. Below are brief notes regarding intended uses of the following materials.

### Interview Questions

This instrument provides a list of questions to be asked in interviews and small groups involving both college and community leaders. An interviewer/recorder needs to carefully record and coalesce responses to these questions, looking for common themes and central issues.

### College Retreat: Focusing on Shared Values

Drawing on both the values developed in the *Building Communities* report and those distilled from interviews of college and community leaders, the college can participate in a half-day retreat designed to give large numbers of the college family the opportunity to discuss and distill those values that will serve the college and community well.

## Discussion Exercise: Shared Values

Before a values statement becomes a formal document, the values need to be clarified and refined in ways that give legitimacy to the varied perspectives of college and community leaders and, at the same time, establish common ground. This exercise may be used to help refine values statements, identify potential issues and barriers, and develop strategies or activities to minimize any discrepancies.

## Clarifying Key Value Concepts

A series of questions is offered to facilitate clarification of college and community values.

## Interview Questions

1. What do you most care about as a member of the college community? As a member of the larger community?

2. How do you want to be treated by your colleagues? By the community?

3. What is distinctive about the college? About the community?

4. Are there existing barriers to trust, honesty, and openness?

5. What is your vision for the future of the college? For the future of the community?

6. What elements would your ideal work environment include?

7. What elements would increase the likelihood of collaboration in the college? In the community?

8. What are the classic stories told at the college? In the community?

9. How are values communicated to students? To prospective students?

10. What values will most promote student success at the college? In the community?

# Retreat Agenda

(One-Half Day)

| Agenda Item | Time |
|---|---|
| OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS AND VALUES COMPONENT | 10 min. |
| BUILDING COMMUNITIES | 10 min. |
| Review of *Building Communities* report and theme<br>Purpose of retreat | |
| FEEDBACK FROM STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS OF COLLEGE EMPLOYEES AND COMMUNITY LEADERS | 15 min. |
| FOCUS GROUPS: BUILDING COMMUNITY WITHIN THE COLLEGE | 20 min. |
| Planning Council member in each group serves as leader. Tasks: (1) Each group will discuss and devise recommendations regarding how the college can and should build community on campus; (2) Each group will identify two to three issues barriers that will need to be addressed if community building is to be successful; (3) Focus group will provide a two-minute report to the larger group. | |
| FOCUS GROUP REPORTS AND DISCUSSION | 30 min. |
| (Written notes turned in for compilation) | |
| FOCUS GROUPS: BUILDING COMMUNITY BEYOND THE COLLEGE | 20 min. |
| Tasks: Same as above, with attention turned to community building in the service region external to the college. | |
| FOCUS GROUP REPORTS AND DISCUSSION | 30 min. |
| (Written notes turned in for compilation) | |
| CAMPUS FORUM: STRATEGIC ISSUES IN BUILDING COMMUNITIES | 60 min. |
| Open Discussion | |
| WRAP-UP | |

# Discussion Exercise: Shared Values

Form groups of five to seven. Focusing on the values related to building communities, complete the following tasks:

- Identify two to three challenges/issues/barriers that will need to be addressed if the community building initiatives in the college and the community are to be successful.

- Create two to three statements which succinctly express values that the college affirms are important if it is to build community. Repeat this exercise, focusing on similar values for the community.

- Identify two to three specific activities or strategies the college and community should pursue to reduce barriers and/or encourage value development.

Each discussion group should designate a spokesperson to provide a brief report to the larger group. The results of the work of this discussion group should be summarized, shared with participants, and used as a resource in developing a final values statement.



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## Clarifying Key Value Concepts

The following four sets of questions need to be answered both by college and community respondents. The format is designed to facilitate the clarification of values when perspectives among college and community strategic planning participants might differ.

WHAT IS OUR VISION FOR THE COLLEGE?

WHAT IS OUR VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY?

WHAT IS OUR COMMITMENT TO STUDENTS?

WHAT IS OUR COMMITMENT TO POTENTIAL STUDENTS?

HOW CAN THE COLLEGE HELP TO MAKE THE COMMUNITY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE?

HOW CAN THE COMMUNITY HELP TO MAKE THE COLLEGE THE BEST IT CAN BE?

HOW DO COLLEGE EMPLOYEES WISH TO TREAT EACH OTHER AND COMMUNITY GROUPS/MEMBERS WITH WHOM THEY DEAL?

HOW DO COMMUNITY MEMBERS WISH TO TREAT EACH OTHER AND COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES WITH WHOM THEY DEAL?

# V. ENVIRONMENTAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SCANNING

A central effort in strategic planning is the identification and analysis of environmental and internal conditions which will significantly affect the future of the college and the community. Pertinent environmental factors to be considered will likely include demographic trends, political issues, economic and labor market conditions, social values, competition in the higher education market, technological change, and the aspirations held by significant external constituencies of the college. Looking internally, the college may wish to assess enrollment trends and patterns, student characteristics and goals, faculty and staff characteristics and needs, curriculum and instructional improvement efforts, collective bargaining issues, policy gaps, facility needs, financial trends and projections, human and fiscal resource development priorities, and so on.

## A Menu of Approaches

A variety of approaches have been effective in undertaking environmental and institutional scanning in collegiate settings. The scope and method for this strategic analysis will depend on each institution's objectives, previous assessment efforts, existing information, and resources available for research and planning.

In accord with the major theme of this guidebook, it may be useful to organize the information-gathering effort around the major topics of the *Building Communities* report: students and faculty, curriculum, instruction, campus communication, community partnerships, leadership, and assessment. Provided at the end of this chapter and in Appendix I are two instruments specifically designed to assist colleges in assessing their current status in relation to the recommendations set forth in the AACJC Futures Commission report.

Using the following "menu" as a stimulus, each college may create environmental and institutional scanning methods appropriate to its unique circumstances.

### Review of Existing Information

Certainly it makes sense to begin by reviewing information currently available, evaluating its accuracy and pertinence, and identifying gaps that need to be filled. Those gaps can then be addressed incrementally by seeking new information sources, building on existing research efforts, or designing new research projects. The important point is that strategic planning is a continuous learning process, and its initiation need not await that unforeseeable future time when all possible research is complete and perfect.

To support its environmental assessment efforts, the institution may draw on information available from a variety of sources, including, for example, studies and reports produced by local and state planning offices, public utility companies, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, newspapers, and the Census Bureau. Information about the college itself will be available from the array of reports, studies, and surveys that the institution produces either routinely or for special purposes. Included, for example, are enrollment statistics; surveys of students, staff, employers, and graduates; studies of student demographics, performance, and attrition; reports produced for state or federal offices; program reviews; self-study reports for accreditation; advisory committee recommendations; and so on. An inventory of this existing information and review by the Planning Council will likely provide a very substantial basis for the planning process.

## Surveys

Either to collect general planning information (e.g., through a community needs assessment or campus opinion poll) or to focus attention on a particular planning issue (e.g., marketing or student retention), the Planning Council may occasionally request or conduct a special survey. Careful attention to the wording of items, sampling techniques, response rates, and interpretation of results will lend strength to this approach.

## Interviews

Structured interviews, conducted by trained interviewers, are a useful way to ensure breadth in the perspectives, opinions, and information contributed to the planning process. Potential interviewees might include students, faculty, staff, administrators, policy makers, and key leaders of community constituencies. Interview results may be analyzed and succinctly summarized for the Planning Council.

## Focus Groups

The focus group, a familiar method in marketing research, is potentially a very rich source of planning information, a rewarding strategy for broadening involvement in planning, and a useful forum for qualitative assessment. Focus groups should be small (i.e., no more than 15 people, with seven to 10 ideal), brief (no longer than two and one-half hours), well-planned, and skillfully facilitated. The "focus" may be a particular audience (e.g., business leaders, faculty, minority students, public school counselors) or a particular issue (e.g., outcomes assessment, curriculum, business/industry partnerships). Ideally, members of the college Planning Council may serve in each focus group meeting as facilitators, astute listeners, and recorders.

## Invited Briefings

Very often, the Planning Council will identify individuals in the college and community who, by virtue of their particular position, experience, or expertise, can contribute important information or perspective to the planning process. A useful technique is to devote one Planning Council meeting (or even a full-day workshop) to a series of 10-minute "briefings" provided by these invited individuals. Planning Council subcommittees or special task groups may also use this technique in developing their assigned topic.

## Planning Retreats

The planning retreat is a frequently favored method for working with the faculty, the administrative team, the governing board, and/or community representatives in clarifying values, sharing visions, and identifying strategic issues. Significant benefits often accrue when people are gathered in an informal setting away from the distractions of the workplace.

## Campus and Community Forums

Both very early in the planning process — as a method for identifying issues worthy of exploration — and also toward the end of the process — as an opportunity for broad audiences to react to position papers or to a draft of the planning document— the open forum or "hearing" promotes inclusiveness and open communication. Opportunities for participants to speak (within specified time limits) may be supplemented by the use of structured forms for written comments.

The task in strategic analysis is to transform large amounts of data into smaller amounts of useful information and then to determine what implications the information holds for the future of the college and the community. That task becomes the Planning Council's challenge as the group sorts, analyzes, and discusses the results of environmental and institutional scanning efforts.

# Suggested Activities and Resources

Provided in the following pages are selected materials that may be useful, either singly or in combination, in environmental and institutional scanning. This collection is certainly not exhaustive, nor is it meant to be prescriptive. Rather, the examples are offered to stimulate thinking about methods that might be tailored to match the unique characteristics and circumstances of a particular community college in a particular community. Below are brief notes regarding the intended uses of materials provided.

**Inventory of Information Sources for Planning**

This instrument may be used by the Planning Council or the administrative team as a simple guide for identifying and evaluating existing information that is potentially useful in planning.

**Recommendations from the *Building Communities* Report: Assessment Worksheet**

Results of the institutional self-assessment (see Appendix I) may provide the basis for further discussion, identification of needs for local study and research, and selection of strategic issues. This worksheet, adapted from AACJC workshop materials, may be useful in interpreting and pursuing assessment findings.

**Interview Format**

This format, or a locally tailored version, may serve as the basis for interviews conducted with college employees and with leaders in the broader community.

**Focus Group Planning Material**

Provided on separate pages are (1) a general protocol for focus group planning, (2) a worksheet for use by planning committees, (3) a draft agenda for focus group meetings, and (4) a list of potential questions to be posed during a focus group meeting.

# Inventory of Information Sources for Planning

| | Available | Not Available | In Progress |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Statements of institutional mission, values, goals | | | |
| 2. Institutional surveys and studies | | | |
| • Entering student surveys | | | |
| • Nonreturning student surveys | | | |
| • Exit interviews | | | |
| • Graduate/completer surveys | | | |
| • Faculty/staff surveys | | | |
| • Retention/attrition studies | | | |
| • Student demographic studies | | | |
| • Transfer studies | | | |
| • Placement studies | | | |
| • Employer surveys | | | |
| • Program/course evaluations | | | |
| • Self-study reports | | | |
| • Special committee reports | | | |
| • Alumni surveys | | | |
| • Community needs assessments | | | |
| • Labor market surveys | | | |
| 3. Studies of student performance | | | |
| • On admissions, achievement, and/or placement tests | | | |
| • In credit courses, internships, competitions, etc. | | | |
| • After transfer | | | |
| • In jobs related to study | | | |
| • On standardized or locally developed examinations | | | |
| • On pre- and post-tests | | | |
| • On licensure examinations | | | |
| 4. Routine reports and publications | | | |
| • Enrollment reports | | | |
| • Course schedules | | | |
| • Financial and audit reports | | | |
| • Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System/Higher Education General Information Survey reports | | | |
| • Reports for government agencies (e.g. civil rights, financial aid, veterans' programs) | | | |

| | Available | Not Available | In Progress |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Reports or studies by other organizations | | | |
| • Chambers of commerce | | | |
| • Utility companies | | | |
| • Newspaper research offices | | | |
| • Economic development agencies | | | |
| • Local and state planning offices | | | |
| • Trade associations | | | |
| • Census Bureau | | | |
| • Employment offices | | | |
| • State education agencies | | | |
| • University research projects | | | |
| • Commissioned studies or reports | | | |
| 6. Program reviews and personnel evaluations | | | |
| 7. Advisory committee recommendations | | | |
| 8. Governing board directives | | | |
| 9. State education plans or directives | | | |
| 10. Planning activities | | | |
| • Surveys | | | |
| • Interviews | | | |
| • Focus groups | | | |
| • Invited briefings | | | |
| • Planning retreats | | | |
| • Campus/community forums | | | |
| • Position papers | | | |
| 11. Other: | | | |



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## Recommendations from the *Building Communities* Report: Assessment Worksheet

MAJOR AREA:
( )Students ( )Faculty ( )Curriculum ( )Instruction ( )Campus Community

( )Community Partnerships ( )Leadership ( )Assessment

EXISTING STRENGTHS:

APPARENT WEAKNESSES:

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES:

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/RESEARCH NEEDED:

PRIORITY FOR ACTION: ( )High ( )Medium ( )Low
Why?

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION(S):

POTENTIAL COMMUNITY-BUILDING STRATEGIES/BENEFITS:

## Interview Format

RESPONDENT _____

( ) Community
( ) Administrator
( ) Faculty
( ) Staff
( ) Student

POSITION/DEPT. OR
DIVISION _____

I. Background: How long have you lived in the service area? Please describe your involvement in the community and its educational institutions.

II. Environmental/Community Issues: What are the three or four major issues facing this region during the 1990s? What is unique about the area? What are its greatest resources and strengths?

III. The Community College: Please describe your involvement with the community college. What are your perceptions regarding the college?

IV. Priorities: What do you see as the single most important priority to be addressed in this initiative to "build communities"? What single initiative, in your view, could most enhance (1) college responsiveness to the community and region, and (2) community/regional support for the college?

V. Challenges and Barriers: What do you anticipate will be the most significant challenges to be met or barriers to be overcome? Are there barriers, disagreements, or ideological differences that need to be addressed? Are there important issues that no one seems to be talking about? Are there striking examples of cooperation and resource sharing that you can point to?

VI. Values and Vision: From your perspective, how would you describe the ideal outcomes of this strategic planning process? What is your vision regarding the role of the community college in the educational development of the region?

Other Comments/Concerns/Suggestions:

# Focus Group Protocols

Facilitating a focus group involves a few simple protocols. The facilitator(s) provides general instructions to a group of no more than 15, and preferably seven or eight, participants. First, the group needs to be given ground rules and context. Participants need to understand clearly their purpose in discussing a certain topic, and need a sense of the desired outcomes of the discussion.

The facilitator should make his or her introductory comments brief and specific. Then the focus group can respond to a series of questions or related topics that are apportioned over the designated time period (not to exceed two and one-half hours). The ground rules for this discussion incorporate the principles of active listening and brainstorming, and include the following:

- The facilitator and other group members should be encouraged to ask clarifying questions.
- The facilitator is encouraged to give feedback on what he or she has heard, asking group members to verify, augment, or restate points of view when necessary.
- No one member should monopolize or dominate the discussion. The facilitator should be willing to intervene when this occurs.
- Highly evaluative, judgmental, or critical responses are discouraged. The desire is for open sharing of ideas.
- An exploratory tone is encouraged, one that looks for several responses to a particular question or quandary.
- Group members are encouraged to "piggyback" on other members' ideas, ask one another for clarification, and cooperate in the discussion in other ways.

Part of the focus group facilitation process involves the accurate, objective recording of what is discussed. As a concluding task, a summary document should encapsulate the major issues and themes developed, and these may be drawn from written notes. It may also be desirable to audiotape the presentation for later listening to double-check impressions.

# Focus Group Planning

**Subcommittee:**

( )Students and Faculty ( )Curriculum ( )Instruction ( )Campus Community
( )Assessment ( )Community Partnerships ( )Leadership

**Participation**

In general, what groups or constituencies within the college or the community should be represented in this focus group?

Specifically, who (from the college or the community/region) should be especially invited to participate in the focus group meeting?

**Agenda Planning**
Review focus group draft agenda and note suggested changes.

**Strategic Questions**

What specific questions should be presented for discussion in the focus group meeting?

- 
- 
- 

**Materials**

What specific materials (*not* to exceed three to four pages) should be used as hand-outs in the focus group meeting?

- Recommendations from *Building Communities*
- 
- 

**Schedule/Arrangements**

Focus group meeting time preference: #1_____ #2_____

Recorder/reporter for focus group meeting:_____

# Draft Agenda for Focus Group Meetings

| Agenda Item | Responsibility | Time |
|---|---|---|
| WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS | | 10 min. |
| OVERVIEW<br>Strategic planning project<br>Purpose of focus group meeting<br>Distribution of response forms | | 5 min. |
| CONTEXT FOR FOCUS GROUP<br>Recommendations from *Building Communities* report<br>Other materials/information (optional) | | 10 min. |
| STRATEGIC QUESTIONS<br>Presentation and focused discussion of strategic questions and issues prepared by subcommittee | | 50 min. |
| OPEN FORUM<br>Participant opportunity to make statements regarding additional concerns, issues, or priorities (two-minute limit per person)<br>Discussion (as time allows) | | 30 min. |
| COMPLETION OF RESPONSE FORMS<br>Participant opportunity to prioritize issues, make suggestions, etc. | | 15 min. |

# Focus Group Questions

**Questions Related to Focus Group Topic**

(Briefly review the Futures Commission recommendations pertaining to the focus group topic and questions developed by the Planning Council subcommittee.)

1. Which recommendations have particular importance for this college and this community? Why?

2. Are there other concerns (related to topic) that deserve priority consideration? Why?

3. What are the *most important* priorities for action related to this topic?

4. Thinking through what has been said about issues and priorities, where do you see special opportunities within the college, in the community, or between the college and the community for creating connections, partnerships, and collaboration?

**Questions Related to Overall Strategic Planning**

5. How can the college strengthen its relationship with the community?

6. How can particular individuals and groups in the community more effectively support the community college?

7. Overall, what are the *most important* strategic issues affecting the future educational development of our region?

# VI. IDENTIFICATION OF STRATEGIC ISSUES

The sorting of information, perceptions, values, and aspirations that occurs during the Planning Council's discussion and debate cumulatively results in the identification of discrepancies between "present status" and "desired state." Over the course of discussions, the tendency will be for those "discrepancy needs" to gain emphasis by being viewed from different vantage points and through both quantitative and qualitative assessments. Several methods may be used to provide some structure for deliberations — and to promote consensus building within the Planning Council.

A technique that has been useful in a wide variety of community college settings to facilitate the work of summarizing information, refining the definition of critical issues, and postulating potential strategic responses is the development of position papers on selected topics. Following the organization of the *Building Communities* report, for example, position papers might focus on each of the seven major topics addressed therein. Alternatively, papers might focus on specific issues (e.g., minority student recruitment and retention or community economic development), on functional areas of the college (e.g., student services, instructional programs, or finance and facilities), or on other topics. The actual writing may be accomplished by the subcommittees of the Planning Council, by other groups (e.g., a college committee or the faculty organization), or by a selected individual in the college or community who possesses particular expertise.

To serve effectively as a basis for discussion and decision making, position papers should be short, succinct, and substantive, clearly distinguishing between fact and opinion. Components of each topical paper might include:

1. A brief summary of salient information pertaining to the assigned topic, describing "what is"

2. A brief statement of vision or aspiration, describing "what should be"

3. A brief statement of planning assumptions, describing perceived future conditions or trends that are likely to have a significant impact on college and community development in the area of concern

4. Delineation of strategic issues for the college and community, as related to the assigned topic

5. Formulation of recommended strategies for addressing issues, implementing values, and reducing the discrepancy between "what is" and "what should be"

In addition to having the Planning Council review the completed position papers, it may be desirable to disseminate the documents more widely, providing opportunities for concerned constituents to respond either orally or in writing.

As an alternative to the development of position papers — or perhaps as a supplementary activity — the Planning Council subcommittees may choose to work through a structured exercise that leads them toward the definition of strategic issues and associated recommendations pertaining to their assigned topics.

A critical juncture in the planning process is a final Planning Council workshop wherein the group achieves consensus regarding a distilled list of those strategic issues and directions that are most important to the future educational development of the college and its community. To summarize this process, a draft document may be developed to integrate findings and state explicitly the conclusions that have been reached. This document may serve essentially as the first draft of the strategic plan.

# Suggested Activities and Resources

Provided in the following pages are selected materials that may be useful, either singly or in combination, in the process of delineating strategic issues and moving toward formulation of strategic recommendations. Below are brief notes regarding the intended uses of these materials.

**Strategic Issues: Backdrop Questions**

In the process of probing issues and identifying specific strategic planning recommendations, certain questions need to be responded to because they reflect some of the more difficult, volatile underlying concerns raised by the AACJC Futures Commission report. These backdrop questions often need to be grappled with while fleshing out position papers, before developing specific recommendations.

**Strategic Issues: Identification and Ranking**

This rather simple feedback form may be used to summarize group discussions and elicit individual responses. When the responses are aggregated, such a tool can be useful in identifying both areas of agreement and issues that require further discussion. Since the delineation of crucial strategic issues is generally an iterative process, this exercise may be repeated at several points in the planning process, thereby facilitating over time the development of increasing precision and group consensus.

**Developing Strategic Issues and Recommendations: A Worksheet**

Focused on the major topics addressed in the *Building Communities* report, this worksheet consists of a series of questions which may be used to guide the work of Planning Council subcommittees. Adapted from materials developed for the AACJC College Team Workshops, the exercise is a logical way to pursue issues identified in the institutional self-assessment process suggested in the previous chapter.

**Position Paper Components**

When position papers are commissioned, it is extremely helpful to provide designated authors with guidance regarding content, length, and format. This hand-out serves as an example of such guidance.

**Response Sheet**

At various points in the planning process, it may be desirable to distribute written materials (e.g., position papers, a draft of the strategic plan) for review by the Planning Council or broader audiences. A brief response sheet, completed by readers, can provide valuable feedback. This example was prepared to accompany a paper summarizing strategic issues and recommendations; however, the general format may be adapted for other purposes.

# Strategic Issues: Backdrop Questions

## Students

1. Does our student population match the demography of our service area?

2. Are we effectively retaining various student groups — the old as well as the young, minority as well as majority, part-time as well as full-time, etc.?

3. Are programs and services reflective of various student contingents and their differing needs and interests, rather than being homogenized to serve everyone, at the same time and in the same way?

4. Are there particular subgroups at risk or in crisis in the external community that the college is not now serving but perhaps should serve?

5. Does an analysis of policy, procedures, and formal practice offer any evidence of institutional racism or sexism, perhaps a vestige of an earlier era in organizational life?

6. Are expectations of students spelled out and made available in a number of forms both to prospective and current students?

## Faculty

1. After selection, does the orientation and mentoring of new faculty continue for an extended period (at least one academic year)?

2. Are new faculty given time to develop necessary skills, or are they assigned multiple preparations and the more difficult or less popular teaching assignments?

3. Has the college carefully articulated and planned development experiences to ensure that new and part-time faculty are committed to the community college philosophy and the students that philosophy encompasses?

4. Do part-time faculty's teaching assignments generally fall in the late afternoon and evening? Do they have adequate supervision? Are the support services they receive at those times roughly equivalent to services provided during the day?

5. What is the percentage of increase in minority faculty hired during the last five years? How does this group's average tenure at the college compare with length of stay of nonminority faculty members?

6. Are there development programs in place to help current staff who lack certain qualifications acquire the needed skills or credentials?

7. What effort has been given to attracting significant numbers of minority part-time faculty?

## Curriculum

1. Do all credit courses stress specific aspects of literacy?

2. Are interdisciplinary programs evident? Have they been institutionalized — provided resources and administrative support? Are they included in teaching load?

3. Are there clear patterns of continuity between credit and noncredit programs, with students flowing in both directions because matters of sequencing and timing have been considered?

4. Have faculty established effective prerequisite course guidelines that ensure that the majority of students entering particular courses will be able to perform at the necessary skill level?

5. Have programs been carefully coordinated and sequenced? For example, in a multicollege setting, can the institution ensure comparability of course and program credits?

6. Are the completion rates for the AA/AS and AAS degrees comparable? Are there real incentives (i.e., strong program reputation and transferability of credit) for completing an associate degree before pursuing a baccalaureate degree?

7. Are there close alliances between liberal and technical programs that help students cross these artificial mission boundaries?

8. Is program review vital and regular?

9. Does the *printed* curriculum (i.e., in the catalog) match the *taught* curriculum (i.e., in the classroom)? How do the printed and the taught curricula compare to the *actual* curriculum (i.e., as experienced by students through their course-taking patterns)?

## Teaching

1. Is research on teaching and learning tied to classroom teaching through programs of professional development?

2. Is effective teaching the focus of programs that reward and recognize college faculty?

3. Are there formal programs and incentives in place that encourage faculty to pursue cooperative learning within the classroom?

4. Does allocation of fiscal resources reflect teaching and learning as a top institutional priority?

5. Do policies on overload, late registration, withdrawal, etc. reflect a strong college commitment to teaching and learning?

6. Does the college use instructional technology in ways that offer the classroom teacher additional resources for monitoring, recordkeeping, drills, practice, etc.?

7. Are the instructional implications of technology constantly explored, tested, evaluated, and, when appropriate, implemented?

8. Have all major employee groups been asked to define their roles in strengthening teaching and learning and in serving students?



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## Campus Community

1. Do the timing and organization of programs and services reflect the needs of nontraditional students?
2. Has the college developed programs that are targeted to fit the needs of more than one contingent of students (e.g., young, full-time, returning, part-time)?
3. Are clear, multiple pathways set forth for achieving educational goals?
4. Are there physical spaces that are pleasant and welcoming to informal gatherings of students?
5. Does the college, especially its students, regularly interact with the larger community?
6. Are there highly visible programs that reflect cultural diversity and culturally diverse interests?
7. Does a cursory tour of the college campus reveal evidence of students and staff mingling informally across race, age, and cultural boundaries?

## Partnerships

1. Do faculty from various educational sectors in the community confer with each other in significant, ongoing ways?
2. Do top leaders, including boards and CEOs from various educational institutions and agencies, meet to discuss/ resolve educational issues?
3. Is the dialogue between employers and the faculty of the technical programs that serve them substantive rather than cursory?
4. Are turf issues resolved quickly by college leadership?
5. Are collaborative skills and programs highly sought and valued by the college? Are collaborative programs emphasized and institutionalized over time?
6. Are there programs in place which students can begin in high school, continue in the community college, and finish in a four-year setting?
7. Are there vital interinstitutional collaborations?

## Leadership

1. Do top leaders communicate a clear vision for the college and establish behaviors and guidelines for achieving it?
2. Are potential leaders identified early and then encouraged and supported through institutional assignments, mentoring, and formal educational experiences?
3. Are minorities and women a significant proportion of such a cadre?
4. Has the percentage of women and minorities in leadership roles risen significantly during the last five years? Has the growth kept pace with their proportionate representation in the job market and among the student body?

5. Are programs in place that encourage faculty to move beyond discipline interests and structures to focus on larger and more comprehensive leadership matters?

6. Do community college administrators demonstrate educational leadership, embodying the principles of great teaching and active learning? Do they insist on the need to focus on student needs? Do they relate to followers as colleagues?

## Assessment

1. Have specific institutional outcomes, especially student learning outcomes, been delineated? Are there structures in place to assess these outcomes on a regular basis?

2. Are all assessment activities clearly tied to planning?

3. Is there a growing contingent within the college community with the expertise to assess various aspects of institutional effectiveness? Is there an ongoing program of professional development to increase such a cadre?

4. Are programs in place which assess literacy and general education competence at the completion of a program of study?

# Strategic Issues: Identification and Ranking

**Part I**

The following strategic issues were identified during the Planning Council meeting on_____. Some similar items have been combined, and the categories have been added.

Please review the list and then rank order the items, using the space to the left of each statement, from #1 (highest priority) to # ___(lowest priority).

Community Building

_____(issue statement) etc.

Students and Faculty

_____(issue statement) etc.

Curriculum

_____(issue statement) etc.

Instruction

_____(issue statement) etc.

Community Partnerships

_____(issue statement) etc.

Leadership

_____(issue statement) etc.

Assessment

_____(issue statement) etc.

**Part II**

Please review the list again. Then, based on your own second thoughts, review of interview summaries, discussions, and other information, please suggest additions, deletions, or modifications on the back of this page.

# Developing Strategic Issues and Recommendations: A Worksheet

TOPIC: ( )Students ( )Faculty ( )Curriculum ( )Instruction
( )Campus Community ( )Community Partnerships
( )Leadership ( )Assessment

TARGET ISSUE:_____

**Existing Strengths/Documentation of Achievement**

What existing college or community programs/services address this issue?

What evaluative evidence is available to document success?

**Apparent Gaps/Need for Effort**

In what specific areas is there a need to strengthen current programs or design new ones related to this issue?

**Strategic Objective**

In specific terms, what should the college/community aim to accomplish?

**Desired Results**

If the strategy is successful, what observable, "documentable" results will be produced?

**Involvement Needed**

What groups or individuals within the college should be involved in addressing this issue?

**Potential Campus or Community Connections**

What community organizations or leaders should be involved? How might this initiative contribute to building an enhanced sense of community?

**Information/Research Needed**

What specific additional information is needed to support planning and implementation efforts in this area?

**Resources Needed**

What are the evident needs for resources (personnel, time, space, equipment, and dollars)?

**Special Considerations**

Are there unique circumstances, opportunities, or requirements that should be taken into account?

**Potential Barriers**

What problems or constraints can be anticipated?

**Justification**

What benefits might the college/community realize through acting on this issue? What penalties might result from inattention or inaction?

# Position Paper Components

## Rationale

Provide a brief statement of background information regarding the assigned topic. The task is to summarize succinctly (1) "what are"— the most salient facts describing current conditions— and (2) "what should be" — the most pertinent or compelling values, visions, and aspirations expressed by the college and the community. This summary should be derived from information available through written materials, interviews, briefings, focus groups, and other sources. Length limit: two pages, typed and single-spaced.

## Planning Assumptions

Provide one to four statements that succinctly describe perceived future conditions or trends pertinent to the assigned topic. Length limit: one-half page, typed and single-spaced.

## Strategic Issues/Directions

Given an understanding of (1) "what is" in contrast to "what should be" and (2) planning assumptions, consider the implications. Then delineate the most significant "discrepancy needs", that is, the strategic issues that must be dealt with if the college and community are to move effectively in desired directions over the next several years. Length limit: one page, typed and single-spaced.

## Strategic Recommendations

Formulate recommended strategies for addressing the identified issues and reducing the discrepancy between current state and desired state. Length limit: one page, typed and single-spaced.

# Response Sheet on Strategic Issues: Priorities for the Future

Based on the information presented in this paper, and in light of your own knowledge and experience, please respond to the following statements. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree by circling the appropriate number on the response scale:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = moderately disagree
3 = somewhat disagree
4 = no opinion
5 = somewhat agree
6 = moderately agree
7 = strongly agree

Space is provided for additional comments and suggestions.

1. a. The position paper provides an apparently accurate and appropriate summary of the present status of the college and its community. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   b. The paper is "on target" with regard to the identification of issues that should be addressed through the strategic plan. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   c. The paper provides a clear and succinct presentation of proposed strategic recommendations. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Comments:

2. Listed below in abbreviated form are the strategic recommendations set forth in the paper. For *each item*, please indicate the extent to which you support its inclusion as a part of the strategic plan.

   (List each strategic recommendation with the response scale alongside.)

Comments:

3. On the whole, I concur with the strategic recommendations set forth in the paper. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

# VII. FORMULATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Once the important strategic issues have been identified, the next linear step in the planning process is to specify the desirable approaches for dealing with those issues. There is ample evidence, however, that human beings do not always (or even usually) think and solve problems in consistently linear sequence. Thus, it is altogether unlikely that problems and opportunities (strategic issues) will have been identified without some concurrent discussion of possible solutions or responses (strategic alternatives). In fact, certain elements of the strategic plan may begin to seem virtually inevitable as the planning process unfolds.

A final stage of the strategic planning process should be the Planning Council's endorsement of a focused set of strategic recommendations. To focus on the planning *document* as the most important outcome of the process could be misleading, however, in that such an emphasis implies a degree of finality and inflexibility that is inappropriate. Thus, the plan might be more helpfully described as a set of proposed directions or decisions that are tied both to the mission of the college and to a shared vision for the future of the institution and its community.

In formulating strategic recommendations, Planning Council members may find these reminders helpful:

- The strategies should reflect the value placed on community building.
- The strategies should be developed against a backdrop of— and take into account—comprehensive themes, unresolved tensions, and apparent paradoxes that reveal underlying college and community issues and needs.
- The statement should be action-oriented but should not stipulate details of activities or programs (a task more appropriate for "operational" planning).
- In its final form, the strategic plan should set forth the collaborative and reciprocal endeavors of the college *and* the community. Strategic recommendations should therefore designate not only the *desired action*, but also where the *primary or initiating responsibility* lies (i.e., with the college or with the community) and, when possible, the *specific college and/or community constituencies* that should assume responsibility for the action.

## Suggested Activities and Resources

Provided in the following pages are (1) an exercise to facilitate initial formulation of strategic recommendations, (2) a sample outline of the strategic plan, and (3) a further example of the type of simple response form that may be used to elicit feedback on written documents.



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# Initial Formulation of Strategic Plan Recommendations: An Exercise

Set aside three to four hours and prepare the Planning Council for an intense, concentrated work session. It is important for all members to attend this session.

Ask co-chairs or consultants to *briefly* review conclusions to be drawn or inferred from position papers and other significant summary documents. This brief review should last *no more than* 30 minutes.

Set all documents aside, and, relying on the expertise developed through all the deliberations, start from scratch. Consider separately each of the seven sections of the *Building Communities* report. Facilitators will ask the Council to list, as concisely as possible, the high priority recommendations under each major heading (there should be no more than 10 per section). List these priority recommendations on newsprint and post them on the walls for easy review and reference.

As you consider each of the seven sections, designate recommendations for which the primary responsibility will be the college's and those for which primary responsibility will be the community's.

Repeat this process for each of the seven sections represented by the *Building Communities* report. As you work through the process, on separate newsprint make note of recurring themes, overlapping recommendation areas, possible duplication, contradiction, etc. You may also make note of those issues or possible recommendations that do not seem to "belong" anywhere.

As you conclude each section, ask Council members who worked on the subcommittee related to that topic to highlight any obvious, substantial omissions throughout this exercise. Keep in mind that the strategic plan does not spell out operational activities and indicates only high priority recommendations with which the college must deal during the next five years or so.

Ask staff to use these lists to draft the first rough strategic plan, providing only minimal enhancements or additions at this point. The resulting document should be brief, concise, and strategic. It should be submitted for individual and group review as quickly as possible.

# Draft Outline of the Strategic Plan

I. Foreword

II. Members of the Planning Council

III. Prologue

IV. Overview: The College and its Community

V. Shared Values

VI. Planning Assumptions

VII. Building Communities: Strategic Directions

A. Students and Faculty: Partnerships for Learning
   1. Strategies for the College
   2. Strategies for the Community

B. Curriculum: Building Coherence and Cooperation
   1. Strategies for the College
   2. Strategies for the Community

C. Instruction: The Classroom as Community
   1. Strategies for the College
   2. Strategies for the Community

D. Campus Life: The College as Community
   1. Strategies for the College
   2. Strategies for the Community

E. Community Partnerships: Strengthening Ties
   1. Strategies for the College
   2. Strategies for the Community

F. Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment
   1. Strategies for the College
   2. Strategies for the Community

G. Leadership: Ensuring the Future
   1. Strategies for the College
   2. Strategies for the Community

# Response Form for the Strategic Plan

Are there elements in the Prologue, Overview, Values Statement, or Planning Assumptions that need to be amended, augmented, or deleted?

I. STUDENTS AND FACULTY: Do elements/recommendations considered in this section need to be amended, augmented, or deleted? Explain.

II. CURRICULUM: Do elements/recommendations considered in this section need to be amended, augmented, or deleted? Explain.

III. INSTRUCTION: Do elements/recommendations considered in this section need to be amended, augmented, or deleted? Explain.

IV. CAMPUS COMMUNITY: Do elements/recommendations considered in this section need to be amended, augmented, or deleted? Explain.

V. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: Do elements/recommendations considered in this section need to be amended, augmented, or deleted? Explain.

VI. ASSESSMENT: Do elements/recommendations considered in this section need to be amended, augmented, or deleted? Explain.

VII. LEADERSHIP: Do elements/recommendations considered in this section need to be amended, augmented, or deleted? Explain.

# VIII. PRESENTATION, APPROVAL, AND DISSEMINATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

## Presentation

Ideally, a draft strategic plan, somewhat polished but still subject to revision, should be shared in two ways:

- In one or more events that involve key players, especially Planning Council members, and that include those college and community members whose support is needed to forward the plan
- In written *draft* form with a number of individuals and groups who have already been or need to be involved in or aware of the plan

An event format with much to recommend it is a town meeting. Such a structure can involve both college and community leaders and can provide opportunity for immediate reaction and interaction among those whose support is needed. Ideally, Planning Council representation in this event should include key figures from both the community and the college. Faculty members of the Planning Council need to be given significant roles, and the CEO needs to be involved as one who has closely monitored the Planning Council's work and who will play a pivotal role in carrying out the plan.

The written draft of the strategic plan may be shared with all who were involved in providing input — focus group members, interviewees, subcommittee members, and so on. This is an appropriate time to share the plan with key leadership groups such as faculty senates and unions, with representatives of new populations and regions to be served, and in particular with educational institutions and agencies that will play a pivotal role in collaborations between the college and the community.

This is also an appropriate time to brief the governing board in a work session and to provide it with substantive opportunity to ask questions, give feedback, and make suggestions. Ideally, the board has been kept apprised of progress by its own representative(s) in the planning process and by the CEO.

Whatever the format for sharing the draft strategic plan, two elements need to be routinely included in the presentations:

- Mechanisms for providing feedback, along with specific timelines for responding
- A brief overview of how the plan will be used, incorporated into operational planning, continually revised, and so on

At this stage in the planning process, the Planning Council needs to be particularly cognizant of timelines. Input needs to be gathered from a number of sources quickly and accurately. The Planning Council then needs to meet to discuss possible revisions, incorporating as many suggestions as seem appropriate and feasible, but relying strongly on their own judgments as representing a cross-section of the community and the college and as developed through intensive involvement throughout the planning process.



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## Approval and Endorsement

The revised strategic plan is now ready to be approved by the CEO (and his or her cabinet) and by the governing board of the college. If the previous steps have been followed, including frequent progress reports and opportunities for input, this should be a fairly routine process. It is an ideal time to once again outline the ongoing plan for assessing and reviewing the strategic priorities and for tying strategic planning to operational planning. In all likelihood, a reconfigured Planning Council will continue to facilitate these processes.

There are a number of other external and internal constituent groups who may be usefully asked to endorse the strategic plan. This should not be viewed as an approval process, but it is an opportunity for various groups to lend support, to indicate how they wish to respond to elements within the plan, or to indicate additional issues that need to be explored further in future iterations of the document.

## Dissemination

Dissemination of the strategic plan should be wide, minimally including all full-time employees of the college and many leaders within the community. Since the document is not lengthy, it can and should be shared with all those whose support is necessary and who will be impacted by the work. This completed document need not be "slick" or expensively printed. In fact, it may be useful for the format of the document to suggest that it is to be regularly reviewed and revised.

It is also possible to use the strategic plan as a public relations tool to be shared with civic clubs, chambers of commerce, service organizations, the business community, legislators, and so forth.

A discussion of the strategic plan may be usefully included as part of new employee orientation and meetings with advisory boards and articulation committees. The Planning Council should also consider how it wishes to routinely share updates on the progress of implementing the plans .

# IX. IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP: LINKING STRATEGY TO OPERATIONS AND RESOURCES

The critical linkages between strategic planning and operational planning may be promoted through the establishment of planning assumptions, planning guidelines, and priorities for action. The development of these guiding documents for use across the institution promotes the translation of strategic policy into daily practice.

A first step toward implementing strategy is to pose the "if-then" question: "If we aspire to achieve *x* over the next several years, then what must we do in the coming year to progress toward that end?" Using as cornerstones the mission and values statements, the salient information derived from environmental and institutional assessments, and the elements of the strategic plan, the institution must structure the immediate context within which operational planning and resource allocation will be accomplished.

## Planning Assumptions

Planning assumptions are derived from the environmental and institutional assessments and are informed guesses about future conditions. These highly focused and succinct statements should describe the conditions or trends that are likely to have a significant impact on the future development of the college and community.

## Planning Guidelines

Whereas assumptions deal with probable conditions, planning guidelines describe desirable or necessary responses. By placing limits on some actions and encouraging others, these statements create parameters, providing a common framework and concrete guidance to colleagues responsible for developing specific operational plans for a one-year period.

## Action Priorities

A set of highly focused statements— called "special goals," "action goals," or "action priorities," — may be developed to describe key priorities for the coming year. Delineating incremental steps toward identified strategic goals, the priority statements should be limited in number (i.e., five to seven) and supported by an explicit commitment to allocate available resources toward their accomplishment.

## Development Process

The development of planning assumptions, planning guidelines, and action priorities is a task appropriately assigned to the college Planning Council. The major reference points for the Planning Council's deliberations are the college mission and values, the findings of the environmental and institutional assessments conducted during the strategic planning process, and the elements of the strategic plan. In addition to this information base, the group may seek more specific information regarding anticipated circumstances for the coming year. Given the resulting combination of information, value judgments, and intuitive "best guesses," the Planning Council reviews, discusses, evaluates, and works toward consensus on a succinct set of planning assumptions (describing anticipated conditions) and planning guidelines (outlining proposed responses).

While the development of assumptions and guidelines requires the filtering and interpretation of information, the establishment of action priorities may be facilitated through the use of a group process technique for priority setting. Many such techniques have been used successfully. Whatever process is used, it should provide for both open discussion and the eventual transition from discrete individual opinions to a consensual group position.

When finalized, the planning assumptions, planning guidelines, and action priorities should be submitted to the chief executive for final review and approval. Thereafter, it is critically important that the documents be widely disseminated throughout the institution. Copies must be provided to all persons who will be responsible for developing operational plans, and presentation in various campus forums should be encouraged. The important message is that the documents merit serious attention, since they will serve as reference points for ensuing decisions about the approval of operational plans and the allocation of resources.

Each year, the institutional planning cycle should be initiated with a review of the strategic plan. Working with progress reports from the administrative team (and other sources), the Planning Council may be asked to review achievements, discuss barriers encountered, analyze new information, assess new opportunities or challenges, and— based on this information— update the strategic plan. From time to time, the group may choose again to select key issues for focused attention. As in the initial strategic planning process, a variety of techniques (e.g., campus forums, surveys, retreats, focus groups, position papers, or interviews) may be used to support that effort.

Given an updated strategic plan, the Planning Council may be asked each year to revise planning assumptions and guidelines and to propose action priorities that will assist the college and community in progressing toward the achievement of significant strategic goals.

## Suggested Activities and Resources

Provided on the following page is a worksheet that may be used to encourage work groups across the community college to not only consider their roles in the implementation of the strategic plan, but also in particular to consider how they may strengthen *community* in that process.

# Emphasis Plan

The building of communities asks that we commit to one another, to our local community, and to our task as educators. It asks that we demonstrate the value of community through a concern for the whole, for integration and collaboration, for openness and integrity, for inclusiveness and self-renewal.

Focusing on this definition of building communities, identify one or two issues your work group wishes to emphasize during the next year. You may follow the format guidelines provided below to encourage specificity in this planning.

AREA OF EMPHASIS:

(Specify one component of above definition.)

ISSUE:

GOALS:

TASKS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

(Try to list discrete steps and persons who will undertake them and be responsible for results.)

# X. BUILDING COMMUNITIES: A GUIDE FOR DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION

In calling for the building of community, the *community college* seeks to demonstrate a concern for the whole, for integration and collaboration, for openness and integrity, for inclusiveness and self-renewal — concerns that should be evident in the values the institution holds, the goals it aspires to achieve, and the policies, procedures, and programs it implements to realize those aspirations.

This instrument is offered as a tool to help colleges assess their status in regard to certain institutional practices and characteristics that are seen as significant contributors in the community-building process. The format is intended to act either as a guide for group discussions or, more formally, as a survey instrument providing the opportunity for written evaluative comments.

| Concern for the Whole | Comments |
|---|---|
| 1. There are institutional processes focused on the creation, sharing, and alignment of visions for the college community. | |
| 2. A comprehensive process for evaluation of institutional performance is in place. | |
| 3. Institutional evaluation includes consideration of: | |
| • the relationship of the institution to its community | |
| • the relationship among courses, programs, and functions across the institution | |
| • the relationship among people across the institution | |
| • the effectiveness of the core curriculum and across-the-curriculum initiatives | |
| • the overarching outcomes of students' educational experiences | |
| 4. There is clear evidence of coordination, collaboration, and integration between academic affairs and student services. | |
| 5. Campus life initiatives provide opportunities for students to develop on a number of dimensions: intellectual, affective, social, physical, and aesthetic. | |
| 6. Personnel policies, employment benefits, employee assistance programs, and development opportunities reflect an appreciation and respect for the "whole person." | |

**Concern for Integration and Collaboration** **Comments**

7. There are ongoing, institutionalized programs that demonstrate a commitment to integration and collaboration (e.g., interdisciplinary courses and programs, team teaching, cooperative education).

8. General education and technical/career education are effectively integrated *rather than treated as essentially separate "tracks."*

9. There are ongoing, institutionalized processes for working *collaboratively* with:

   - public schools
   - baccalaureate institutions
   - community-based organizations
   - business and industry
   - government.

10. Institutional policies, procedures, and funding arrangements support the forming of partnerships and collaborations rather than encumbering them.

11. Major institutional processes are effectively integrated (e.g., assessment results are used in planning, plans form the basis for allocation of resources, and performance evaluation is linked to professional development).

12. Students are regularly provided collaborative learning opportunities in the classroom, and relationships among students frequently suggest cooperative *rather than competitive activity*.

**Concern for Openness and Integrity**

13. There are multiple pathways for organizational communication and decision making, ranging from the formal to the informal, across leadership strata and including all employees.

14. The institution has both formal and informal processes for soliciting and using input from constituents in its external communities.

15. Evaluation of programs, personnel, and students is an honest, vital, and useful process.

16. Institutional ceremonies, traditions, and celebrations reflect stated values and goals.

17. Shared values and shared visions, reflective of community themes, are evident across institutional functions, levels, units, and locations.

18. The institution and its members keep their word to students, to the community, and to one another.

19. Institutional priorities are clear and clearly tied to resource allocations.

20. Institutional recognitions and rewards purposefully reinforce community-building behavior.

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| Concern for Illusiveness and Self-Renewal | Comments |
|---|---|
| 21. Programs are in place that are specifically designed to free the institution from barriers based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, physical disability, and role. | |
| 22. The institution deals directly and honestly with evidence of inappropriate discriminatory or exclusionary behavior. | |
| 23. Formal orientation programs, individual mentoring, and ceremonies promote the integration of new employees and students into campus life. | |
| 24. There are both formal programs and a variety of informal opportunities for professional growth and development among faculty, staff, and administrators. | |
| 25. Both part-time faculty and part-time students are given the support necessary for them to feel included and to perform successfully in the institution. | |
| 26. Leadership roles and opportunities have been defined for faculty, staff, students, and mid-level administrators, and a process for identifying and developing potential leaders is in place. | |
| 27. Classroom practices consistently include strategies to remove barriers and increase understanding across age, sex, race, religion, national origin, and other delineations. | |

# RESOURCES

Provided below are references for selected publications which offer diverse perspectives on strategic planning, on community college issues, and on a variety of concerns addressed in the report of the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges. The list is by no means comprehensive, and interested individuals are strongly encouraged to pursue other sources of research and guidance.


Adelman, Clifford (ed.). *Assessment in American Higher Education*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Education, 1986.

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# APPENDIX I

## Institutional Self-Assessment Instrument

This instrument is offered as a tool to assist colleges in assessing their current status as related to the recommendations in *Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century*. Definitions for the ratings are as follows:

Exemplary = Proven to be highly successful in meeting institutional goals. May be used as a national model.
Adequate = Meeting current needs, but must be improved and expanded upon.
Inadequate = Proven to be unsuccessful in meeting institutional goals. New directions and strategies are needed.

| **I. Student and Faculty Recommendations**<br>*Community colleges should . . .* | Our college is: | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Exemplary | Adequate | Inadequate |
| 1. Vigorously reaffirm equality of opportunity as an essential goal. | | | |
| 2. Develop an outreach plan for disadvantaged students, specifically including an Early Identification Program with surrounding schools, focusing first on junior high school students. | | | |
| 3. Expand and improve outreach programs for adults, reaching such groups as displaced workers, single parents, and adults returning after military service. | | | |
| 4. Develop a first-year retention program with orientation for all full-time, part-time, and evening students. Such a program would include advising, an "early-warning" system, career counseling, and mentoring arrangements. | | | |
| 5. Reduce, by 50 percent during the next decade, the number of students who fail to complete the program in which they are enrolled. | | | |
| 6. Bring together older and younger students and those from different ethnic and racial backgrounds to enrich learning. | | | |
| 7. Make a commitment to the recruitment and retention of top quality faculty and to the professional development of these colleagues. | | | |
| 8. Increase the percentage of faculty members who are Black, Hispanic, and Asian, by identifying future teachers from among minority students in high schools and community colleges and making graduate fellowships available to minority students who plan to teach in community colleges. | | | |
| 9. Develop a faculty renewal plan, in consultation with the faculty, that includes campus workshops, faculty-led seminars, retreats, short-term leaves, and sabbaticals. | | | |
| 10. Set aside at least 2 percent of the instructional budget for professional development, providing small grants to faculty members to improve teaching through an Innovative Teachers' Fund. | | | |
| 11. Develop policies and programs for the selection, orientation, evaluation, and renewal of part-time faculty. | | | |
| 12. Avoid the unrestrained expansion of part-time faculty and assure that the majority of credits awarded are earned in classes taught by full-time faculty. | | | |

| **II. Curriculum Recommendations**<br>*Community colleges should . . .* | Our college is: | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Exemplary | Adequate | Inadequate |
| 13. Assess the reading, writing, and computational ability of all first-time community college students when they enroll. | | | |
| 14. Place students who are not well-prepared in an intensive developmental education program. | | | |
| 15. Ensure that college students become proficient in the written and oral use of English, with all students completing a college-level writing course. | | | |
| 16. Teach oral and written communication in every class, with student enrollment in the basic English course restricted to no more than 50 students and writing labs scheduled in sufficient blocks of time so that students may receive individual tutoring. | | | |
| 17. Coordinate adult literacy programs as part of the public service mandate of the community college, urging that literacy responsibility be defined by statute at the state level. | | | |
| 18. Require that all associate degree students complete a core curriculum that provides historical perspective, an understanding of our social institutions, knowledge of science and technology, and an appreciation of the visual and performing arts. | | | |
| 19. Increase the impact of the core curriculum by presenting international perspectives in the curriculum, integrating the core into technical and career programs, and finding new ways to accomplish common learning goals for students enrolled in nondegree or part-time programs. | | | |
| 20. Join with schools in 2+2 or 2+1 arrangements in which technical studies programs begun in high school are completed in a community college. | | | |
| 21. Make experimental "inverted degree" models available in every state, through which specialized two-year programs would be followed by a general education sequence offered by a four-year institution. | | | |
| 22. Insist that faculty close the gap between the so-called "liberal" and "useful" arts and that special attention be given to the selection of technical education faculty and administrators to assure that they can develop up-to-date programs that integrate the core curriculum and technical education. | | | |
| 23. Insure the viability of the Associate of Applied Science Degree by giving attention to communication, computation, and problem-solving competencies in addition to technical education skills. | | | |
| 24. Develop a clear agreement among faculty, students, and administrators on what portions of the core curriculum are to be included in education programs. | | | |
| 25. Work with employers to develop a program of recurrent education to keep the work force up-to-date and well-educated. | | | |
| 26. Introduce all students to the concept of life-long learning as part of the college orientation. | | | |

| **II. Curriculum Recommendations *continued***<br>*Community colleges should . . .* | Our college is: | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Exemplary | Adequate | Inadequate |
| 27. Provide adult and continuing education programs that offer enrichment for citizens throughout their lives. Specifically, these programs need to draw on the intellectual and cultural resources of the college, reflect both community college needs and the education traditions of the institution, and be coordinated with schools, churches, and other groups to avoid unnecessary duplication. | | | |
| 28. Emphasize civic literacy for adult continuing education programs by focusing on government, public policy, and contemporary issues. | | | |
| **III. Instruction**<br>*Community colleges should . . .* | | | |
| 29. Insist that good teaching is the hallmark of the community college movement, with students encouraged to be active, cooperative learners. | | | |
| 30. Restrict class size in core curriculum and developmental courses and encourage all faculty to teach core classes and continually strengthen the literacy skills of their students. | | | |
| 31. Establish Distinguished Teaching Chairs or other appropriate recognitions for faculty who have demonstrated excellence in teaching. | | | |
| 32. Promote the role of the faculty member as classroom researcher, focusing evaluation on instruction and making a clear connection between what the teacher teaches and how students learn. | | | |
| 33. Develop a campus-wide plan for the use of computer technology in which educational and administrative applications are integrated. | | | |
| 34. Develop incentive programs for faculty who wish to adapt educational technology to classroom needs. | | | |
| 35. Establish a clearinghouse at AACJC to identify educational software of special value. | | | |
| 36. Use technology to continue to extend the campus, providing instruction to the workplace, to schools, and to other community organizations. | | | |
| 37. Explore new uses of technology to build a national network of community college educators who — through electronic networks, satellite classrooms, and conferences — can transcend regionalism on consequential issues. | | | |

| **IV. College Campus Recommendations**<br>*Community colleges should . . .* | Our college is: | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Exemplary | Adequate | Inadequate |
| 38. build community beyond the classroom by strengthening the traditions of the college as a community of learning and making a full range of support services available to all students, even on weekends and evenings. | | | |
| 39. Encourage counselors to work in close collaboration with faculty to build a learning community, with nonfaculty personnel also playing a strategic role in the building of community on campus. | | | |
| 40. Insist that separation based on age, race, or ethnicity is not permitted and encourage collaboration between students with different backgrounds. | | | |
| 41. Coordinate international activities—perhaps in a single office— using foreign students as campus resources for enriching student and faculty knowledge of other countries. | | | |
| 42. Encourage student participation in community service programs and ask students who participate to write about their experiences. | | | |
| **V. Community Partnership Recommendations**<br>*Community colleges should . . .* | | | |
| 43. Organize school /college consortia, developing a plan for educational excellence, identifying at-risk youth in junior high school, providing enrichment programs that make it possible for such students to complete high school, and providing local high schools with information on the academic performance of their graduates who go to college. | | | |
| 44. Strengthen the transfer function of the community college by urging more students to consider a baccalaureate degree program and making a special commitment to increase transfer rates among Blacks and Hispanics. | | | |
| 45. Insist on coherent two-year/four-year transfer arrangements in every state, including the coordination of academic calendars and common course numbering in general education sequences. | | | |
| 46. Encourage decision makers to use community colleges as a major resource in promoting state or regional economic development. | | | |
| 47. Establish regional clearinghouses to keep track of emerging work force needs in areas served by the community college. | | | |
| 48. Increase training partnerships and exchanges to provide continuing education opportunities for faculty and training/retraining for employers. | | | |
| 49. Carefully integrate alliances with employers into existing community college programs and interests. | | | |

| **VI. Leadership Recommendations**<br>*Community colleges should . . .* | Our college is: | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Exemplary | Adequate | Inadequate |
| 50. Develop strong presidential leaders who are able to inspire colleagues and convey a larger educational vision. | | | |
| 51. Collaborate with universities to prepare a new generation of community college presidents, with special effort given to increasing the number of women and minority leaders. | | | |
| 52. See the president as the foremost advocate for teaching and leading at the college. | | | |
| 53. Strengthen their governance by relying on a wide range of decision-making processes that include collective bargaining, faculty senates, effective committee structures, or other mechanisms. | | | |
| 54. Make substantive leadership development experiences available for faculty and administrators at each community college, with faculty leaders encouraged to more actively participate in these processes. | | | |
| 55. Strengthen the role of community college trustees by stressing their role in selecting an effective leader and defining and monitoring institutional goals, and by expanding the professional development of community college trustees. | | | |
| 56. Refuse to confuse the role of the board of trustees with the role of internal governance; faculty, staff, and student representatives should not be appointed or elected to boards as voting members. | | | |
| 57. Assure that state funding formulas fully acknowledge the nature of services provided to part-time students and the level of support required to serve unprepared students. | | | |
| 58. Urge corporations, private foundations, and philanthropies to remove policies that restrict or prohibit giving to community colleges. | | | |
| 59. Encourage business and industry to help underwrite start-up costs of technical programs in emerging and fast-changing technologies. | | | |
| **VII. Assessment Recommendations**<br>*Community colleges should . . .* | | | |
| 60. Stress classroom evaluation as the central assessment activity of the college. | | | |
| 61. Develop a campus-wide assessment of institutional effectiveness with faculty and administrators involved in explicitly defining educational outcomes. | | | |
| 62. Insist that college-wide assessment measure student competence in literacy, general education, and an area of specialization.<br><br>63. Conduct periodic interviews or surveys of current students, graduates, and employers of graduates to help determine institutional effectiveness. | | | |
| **Comments** | | | |



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# APPENDIX II: BUILDING COMMUNITIES: A STRATEGIC PLAN

FOR OWENSBORO COMMUNITY COLLEGE
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITS COMMUNITY

Owensboro Community College
University of Kentucky
Attn: Dr. Gary M. Green
4800 New Hartford Road
Owensboro, KY 42303-1899
502/686-4400

**Consultant Team**

R. Jan LeCroy
Principal Consultant
President, Dallas Citizens Council
Former Chancellor, Dallas County Community College District

Nancy Armes LeCroy
Associate Consultant
Executive Director, AACJC Commission on the Future of Community Colleges

Kay McClenney
Associate Consultant
President, Mc2 Educational Foundation

Developed with support from the BellSouth Foundation

# PROLOGUE

In this joint college/community planning effort, the central theme for both planning process and planning product was found in the mission of "building communities," as articulated by the AACJC Commission on the Future of Community Colleges. In its 1988 report, the Commission wrote:

> Building communities is, we believe, an especially appropriate objective for the community college because it embraces the institution's comprehensive mission. But the goal is not just *outreach*. Perhaps more than any other institution, the community college also can inspire *partnerships* based upon shared values and common goals. The building of community, in its broadest and best sense, encompasses a concern for the whole, for integration and collaboration, for openness and integrity, for inclusiveness and self-renewal.

The term "community," according to the Commission, is to be defined "not only as a region to be served, but also as a climate to be created." And so it was in this spirit that the Owensboro Community College Planning Council embarked on its visionary venture.

Inevitably, in a process which by design encourages clarification of values, sharing of diverse perspectives, and candid discussion and debate, there arise both recurrent themes — philosophical positions which pervade discussion of discrete issues — and evident tensions — interests and values which appear to be juxtaposed to one another.

Based upon discussion within the Planning Council and with a broad array of community and college constituents, several major themes have been identified. Noted with particular urgency is the need for improved funding for higher education in Kentucky. Owensboro Community College is a new institution, full of promise and enthusiastically supported both by its community and by a strong faculty and staff. However, there exists a crucial need for additional resources to ensure the quality of OCC programs, to expand the accessibility of services, and to preserve the open-door philosophy which is the very essence of a community college. Affirming certain overarching concerns, it is strongly agreed that the college and the community, through joint and continuing efforts, should:

- Enhance community value placed on education, raising both the educational expectations of the community as a whole and the educational achievement of its individual citizens.
- Promote the perception and the reality of an educated citizenry as the crucial cornerstone for economic development, improved quality of life, and an effective democratic form of government.
- Develop and support Owensboro Community College as a center for lifelong learning, with excellence in teaching as its hallmark, with a primary focus on student success, and with an emphasis on outstanding educational programs which are uniquely tailored to the needs of the community.
- Extend educational services to geographical areas and potential student populations which are presently under-served, seeking through collaboration and partnerships to "erase the boundaries" between college and community.
- Aggressively pursue efforts to increase financial resources, including state funding, partnerships with business and industry, and foundation support, to sustain and expand college programs and services, and to provide the desired "margin of excellence."

Among the apparent paradoxes of unresolved tensions which surfaced over the course of the strategic planning effort were the following:

- The perception of the community as stable, open and friendly, culturally aware, progressive, directed, and invested in a collaborative effort — as contrasted with perceptions of the community as "in transition," guarded, resistant to change, unsure of direction, and sometimes invested in "turf protection."
- The importance of serving "traditional" college students, as contrasted with the need to serve "non-traditional" students with special needs.
- Contrasting emphasis on the importance of general education vs. specialized education, of learning skills vs. technical skills, of developmental/remedial education vs. college-level programs.
- Priority given to serving day students, as contrasted with the need to provide comparable service to evening, weekend, and off-campus students.
- Emphasis on teaching, as contrasted with emphasis on service and other nonteaching functions.

- The need to develop the "infrastructure" of a new college, including provision of basic facilities, equipment, and personnel, systems development, and attention to the internal "community" — as contrasted with the desire to pursue innovative, entrepreneurial, externally-oriented initiatives.
- Value placed on collegiality and participative governance, in contrast with the need for efficiency and timeliness in decision making and regard for the responsibilities and authority of line administrators.
- The value of holding high expectations for the college and its employees versus the danger of unreasonable expectations and the hazard of burn-out.
- The desire to address locally-defined needs and priorities in a system characterized by centralized state controls.
- The desire to do everything for everyone, all at once and with excellence, as contrasted with the need to determine well-defined strategic priorities for action.

The Planning Council fully recognizes that these major "themes and tensions" cannot be adequately addressed or resolved by caveat or through singular action. Rather, they are set forth here because the "themes,"if recognized and affirmed, can serve as guiding aspirations for the educational development of college and community; and the "tensions," if honestly identified and honored, can promote significant discussion, creative solutions, and continuous growth in positive directions — for individuals, for the College, and for the community.

In this strategic planning initiative, the effort has been to move beyond a process wherein "the college talks to itself" and toward the development of continuous dialogue and genuine collaboration among college and community constituencies. In the following pages, therefore, recommendations offered "for the College" and "for the community" are seen as delineating important steps in an ongoing and significant joint venture.

## Overview: The College and the Community

On July 15, 1986, Owensboro Community College became the fourteenth community college in the University of Kentucky Community College System. Since that date, the College has built a modern 104-acre campus and has experienced unprecedented growth in student enrollment. In Spring 1989, total headcount enrollment was 1,775, an increase of 20 percent over the previous year.

The College offers the associate in arts degree, the associate in science degree, and the associate in applied science degree. Educational programs include (1) career-oriented programs designed to prepare students for immediate technical or semi-professional employment and (2) general arts and science programs designed to provide the first two years of a baccalaureate degree program. In addition, continuing education and community service offerings include special courses and programs to meet the educational and cultural needs of the community. OCC specializes in career training and retraining programs for business and industry.

The College features an open-door admissions policy, flexible course schedules including day, evening, weekend, and off-campus classes, and financial aid for qualified students. Counseling and advising services are provided to help students assess their aptitudes, determine their vocational and educational goals, select their curricula, and develop personal and social skills. Owensboro Community College is an equal opportunity institution and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national or ethnic origin, handicap, or sex in its admission policies, programs, activities, or employment practices.

The College serves Owensboro, Kentucky, and the surrounding area, including Daviess, Hancock, Ohio, and McLean Counties. With a total population of approximately 135,000, the four-county area has traditionally relied on agriculture, mining, and manufacturing as its economic foundations; however, recent changes have promoted a transition toward a service-oriented economy and efforts toward economic diversification. Featuring cultural opportunities unusual for similar-size communities, the area also benefits from strong community leadership in support of education.





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# Owensboro Community College and Its Community: Shared Values

The regional community and the college community, together, are committed to ensuring these values.

## I. Our Work Must Serve Our Community

We expect our work as educators and community leaders to make a difference in the quality of life in this region. Our collective efforts must ensure a wide range of educational opportunity, encourage economic diversification, and promote lifelong learning. On a more personal level, our efforts must make our citizenry more secure in the prospects of work, more capable of growth and renewal in the midst of change, and more willing to share responsibility and take risk in an effort to ensure the community prospers.

## II. Our Students Deserve Our Best

We value our students and hold high expectations of them. We must instill in them a sense of their own worth and encourage their tolerance and respect of others. Our commitment is to balance their need to secure career skills and the critical capabilities to renew these skills while, at the same time, enlarging their understanding and appreciation of a larger, more complex, and varied world. It is only necessary, then, that we ask our students to expect much of themselves, to be involved while in the classroom, to be disciplined in study, and to commit themselves to the learning process.

## III. Our Community Must Be a Good Place to Live

We believe, in order to forward education, that it is our responsibility to be leaders in the community and to develop future leaders for the community. Since we are optimistic and enthusiastic about our common future, we anticipate that creative problem-solving will be the norm, that possibilities will always be explored, and that we will share responsibilities when the tasks are demanding and the outcomes are important. Although differences among us will remain and must be honored, we pledge to clearly express our own views, carefully listen to other points of view, and reach constructive consensus on those issues most vital to our future.

## IV. Our College Must Be a Good Place toWork

We recognize the value of each person who works in the college community and acknowledge that each member's actions influence others. In order to work effectively, we demand of ourselves the highest competence and integrity. We ask for honesty, dependability, high energy, and courage in our dealings with each other and our students. We believe that if we are to meet successfully the challenges facing us, our expectations of ourselves and our students must be clear, our priorities must be defined and focused, and our trust of one another must be real.

# Planning Assumptions

The following statements describe perceived future conditions or trends which, in the judgment of the OCC Planning Council, are likely to have a significant impact on the College and its community over the next several years. These assumptions provide a common framework within which further operational planning and implementation efforts will be carried forward.

- In order to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in serving students and community, and also in order to comply with criteria for regional accreditation, OCC will engage in systematic, ongoing processes for planning, evaluation, and institutional research.
- OCC will continue to benefit from unusually strong and informed community interest, involvement, and support for the development of the College.
- The college service area has experienced a period of difficult economic conditions, including loss of major industries and an unacceptably high rate of unemployment. Gradual economic recovery is anticipated through expansion of existing business and industry and through active recruitment of new employers; however, the economic outlook is perhaps brighter for Daviess and Hancock Counties than for other counties in its service area.
- The Owensboro region is moving from an industrially-based to a service-oriented job market.
- Area employers require employees with a strong background in communication skills, basic mathematics, positive work attitudes, and critical thinking skills. These skills are often more important to the employer than technical skills.
- The RiverPark Center, a multi-purpose arts center currently under development in downtown Owensboro, will provide Owensboro Community College with facilities for performing and visual arts programs and additional telecommunications activities.
- With the opening of the new campus, increasing numbers of recent high school graduates will be attracted to the campus. Given the economic conditions in the service area, the need for services to "nontraditional" students, including displaced workers and re-entry women, will also be acute.
- Especially in a time of significant initial enrollment growth and acute community need, the resource needs of the College will continue to exceed substantially its readily available resources. Focused planning, clear priorities, and creative resource development will be crucial.
- In the absence of change in the state funding formula for community colleges, state funding for OCC operating costs will be increasingly inadequate. Any increases in state funding will likely be more than offset by increased demands for programs and services.
- As the College establishes eligibility for major federal grants (e.g., through Carl Perkins vocational education and Title III programs), successful OCC proposals could provide needed funds for equipment, special projects, and program start-up.
- The College is presently understaffed. The faculty and staff cannot continue to work at the current pace and with current workloads without the real possibility of burn-out and even detrimental impact on programs and services for students.
- The ratio of credit hours taught by full-time faculty to credit hours taught by part-time faculty will be maintained at approximately 70:30. To keep pace with enrollment growth, a significant number of new full-time faculty members will be employed.
- A campus student center and classroom/office building are needed immediately.
- The College, community and governmental agencies, and other educational institutions will continue to pursue collaborative endeavors for the benefit of students and the overall community.

# I. STUDENTS AND FACULTY: PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING

For the community college, a central mandate is the guarantee of the "open door" to educational opportunity, the promise of empowerment through education. To make good on that promise, the College must provide access for students, an array of services to support their success, strong instructional programs, and a highly qualified faculty committed to the task of building true learning communities. Having successfully navigated the initial challenges of establishing a new college and building a new campus, Owensboro Community College and its community now enter a new phase — a time for building *systems* which continually strengthen teaching and learning.

## Recommendations for the College

Students

- Develop and implement "systems for student success," with emphasis on the following major components:
  - mandatory student orientation
  - mandatory assessment of entering students
  - course placement advising based on assessment
  - strengthened developmental education program, including assessment of exit competencies
  - procedures for monitoring academic progress
  - "intensive care" for high-risk, high-fear students, including tutoring, counseling, and skill-building in time management, test-taking, study skills, etc.
  - strengthened career counseling and job placement services
- Aggressively pursue planning for construction of a student center to provide a "place" for campus community-building activities as well as for co-curricular and community programs.
- Strengthen outreach and service to presently under-served populations including:
  - potential students in Ohio, Hancock, and McLean Counties
  - low-income citizens across the service area
  - evening and weekend students
- Explore alternatives, including referral service and on-campus facilities, to expand access to child care services for children of community college students.
- Provide as role models for students a college faculty and staff which reflect the diversity (in terms of gender, race and age) of the larger community which the College is to serve.
- Improve the system for timely communications for all students—a system which would serve student-to-student, College-to-student, and student-to-College communication needs.
- Provide clear, timely information to schools in the area about programs and services and the skills and competencies that students will need to successfully undertake college-level work.

Faculty

- Carefully define the role, responsibilities, and workload of faculty members at Owensboro Community College.
- Clarify and strengthen processes for selection and orientation of new faculty members.
- Act affirmatively to ensure diversification of the faculty in terms of gender, race, and age.
- Define and implement a variety of means for demonstrating the value placed by the college on teaching excellence.
- Develop a comprehensive, multi-faceted program of professional development.
- Strengthen processes for the selection, orientation, evaluation, and development of part-time faculty.
- Provide office space and increased clerical support for part-time faculty.

## Recommendations for the Community

- Support and facilitate college outreach to rural and low-income populations, as well as efforts to expand student access to child care services.
- Provide needed political support for immediate construction of a campus student center.
- Cultivate broad participation by qualified members of the community to serve as part-time faculty members at OCC.
- Through the media, marketing, community events, and public recognitions, emphasize the importance of higher education and the value of excellence in teaching and learning.



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# II. CURRICULUM: BUILDING COHERENCE AND COOPERATION

A coherent curriculum builds community by avoiding randomness, overlap, and compartmentalization. Owensboro Community College must demonstrate this commitment through careful analysis of existing offerings, complementary planning across all major programs, and clear systems for collaboration, both within the College and across the community. If OCC's curriculum as a whole can become a visible demonstration of the process of building community, it will provide vital, rigorous programs of study of which the region can be proud.

## Recommendations for the College

- Develop an integrated, cohesive model general education program based on a core of common learning, providing students with historical perspective, an understanding of society and culture, a knowledge of science and technology, and an appreciation of the visual and performing arts.
- Strengthen the basic skills component of the curriculum to ensure that students exceed basic skill competency requirements in mathematics, writing, reading, speaking, and human relations.
- Develop and implement interdisciplinary activities, writing and speaking across the curriculum, and greater understanding of an interdependent global community.
- Create a process to develop special and/or unique vocational and technical programs which meet existing and anticipated needs of the region.
- Evaluate lifelong learning needs within the region and develop and promote a program of lifelong learning which emphasizes career retraining, updating, and life enrichment and which incorporates innovative methods of outreach.
- Develop collaborative programs with many of the region's educational institutions which emphasize articulation, shared and sequenced programming, and formal processes for sharing curriculum information.

## Recommendations for the Community

- Encourage curriculum collaborations by establishing formal communication links, convening appropriate articulation groups, and making academic calendars in the region more compatible.
- Facilitate the development of a "pathways" document for students which stipulates competencies to be achieved by the conclusion of high school, sets forth options for study, specifies career opportunities, and provides coherent information to facilitate articulation among various educational entities.
- Provide expertise for planning and delivering both credit and noncredit programs which enhance the economic development of the region.

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# III. INSTRUCTION: THE CLASSROOM AS COMMUNITY

Owensboro Community College has a deep commitment to becoming a premier teaching institution. It has selected excellent faculty who hold high expectations of themselves and their students. Now, how teaching and learning are supported will determine, to great extent, the long-term vitality of the institution. The focus of this emphasis is the classroom. Whether on campus or in outreach centers — some of which are equipped to support distance learning, the classroom is that place where both intellectual and social relationships are strengthened and where faculty and students become active partners in the learning process. The key then is to support the classroom in ways that demonstrate a long-term commitment to building a premier teaching institution.

## Recommendations for the College

- Promote classroom learning strategies for students which increase active collaborative learning, develop critical thinking, and provide regular feedback.
- Develop clear-cut guidelines and policy positions which promote a quality learning environment and include these elements: student/teacher ratios, part-time/full-time faculty ratios, class size, and adequate support staff.
- Develop a multi-year plan for the adequate equipping and maintaining of classrooms.
- Develop and implement a plan to increase capabilities in telecommunications and other instructional and informational technologies.
- Develop comprehensive policies and plan for instructional outreach activities.
- Create clear linkages between formal evaluation processes and instructional improvement, curriculum revision, and professional development.

## Recommendations for the Community

- Support college efforts to secure an additional classroom/office building.
- Develop resource alternatives for OCC which enable the College to meet equipment, staffing, and faculty development needs.
- Provide annual opportunities to recognize excellence in teaching and learning at OCC, perhaps in conjunction with regional meetings and celebrations.

# IV. CAMPUS LIFE: THE COLLEGE AS COMMUNITY

A sense of community at Owensboro Community College must extend beyond the classroom if the College as a whole is to prosper. OCC, like virtually all community colleges, serves commuter students who are often part-time and have many other responsibilities. Add to that the number of part-time faculty, the level of on-campus activity at the College on evenings and weekends, and the hectic schedule that virtually all full-time employees maintain, and the challenges of creating a vital campus life become obvious. The key is to create processes and patterns for meaningful interaction to increase OCC's capacity for relatedness on a number of levels. If this is accomplished, the campus can become self-renewing.

## Recommendations for the College

- Strengthen support services for evening, weekend, and off-campus students, faculty, and staff, providing similar access to programs and services as offered during the day.
- Create explicit development programs for support staff stressing their involvement in communications and planning processes.
- Implement a systematic planning process which establishes clear, focused priorities and sets forth explicit expectations for follow-through.
- Strengthen formal communication processes where they exist and design new processes where needed to assure that information is shared in a regular and timely fashion.
- Provide career preparation and citizenship development through co-curricular programs, paying special attention to public service development and the need to provide a positive environment for all groups, regardless of age, race, or ethnic background.
- Strengthen college traditions and rituals and further develop formal and informal community-building activities which include both staff and student orientation.

## Recommendations for the Community

- Support and help facilitate co-curricular activities at the College, enhancing campus life by marketing and participating in ways which demonstrate broad-based and diverse community support.

# V. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: STRENGTHENING TIES

As this cooperatively developed strategic plan suggests, Owensboro Community College already has a unique relationship with its community. It is a special relationship because the college is committed to outreach and because community leaders are astutely aware of the resources a vital community college brings to the region. Because the community has assumed such great initial responsibility in bringing the College to Owensboro, reciprocal linkages and patterns are already clear and highly valued. But this is only a beginning. If this College-Community partnership is to fulfill the vision of its founders, it must continue to align regional resources, build cooperation, strengthen its impact at the state level, and expand collaborative efforts to serve the community as a whole.

## Recommendations for the College

- Expand formal collaborations with schools in the region to provide enrichment programs, identify and support at-risk youth, and prepare students for and ease the transition to college through dual credit, 2 + 2 programs, etc.
- Expand partnerships with colleges and universities in the area, paying particular attention to joint programs, articulation, common course numbering in general education, faculty exchanges, and professional development collaborations.
- Increase cooperation among community colleges, both in the region and across the state, in particular developing ways to increase community college influence at the state level.
- Act in a convening role to bring together interested parties to address substantive community issues.
- As one example, convene interested parties and assist in the forming of a regional clearinghouse for economic data, using this data to enhance counseling and placement services.
- Develop partnerships with employers which address the general education, training, retraining, and continuing education needs in the region and which encourage staff exchanges and the sharing of technology and equipment.

## Recommendations for the Community

- Provide needed leadership to convene the Green River Area Educational Council, composed of CEOs of various educational entities in the region and charge this council with fostering collaborating and minimizing duplication across educational segments.
- Support and facilitate the formation of a regional clearinghouse for economic data to serve the entire region and expedite collaboration.
- Provide leadership and support for high-quality, high-level cooperative efforts to promote education and economic growth and development.
- Provide needed support, expertise, and marketing for OCC's general education, training, retraining, and continuing education programs in the region.
- Support the College by sharing resources, equipment, and expertise.


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# VI. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND ASSESSMENT

Owensboro Community College seeks to achieve both effectiveness and excellence in service to students and the community. Furthermore, the College embraces the accreditation criteria on institutional effectiveness set forth by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. For these reasons, OCC is committed to an ongoing process of planning and evaluation, to the clear definition of educational goals, to systematic ascertainment of the extent to which those goals are achieved, and to the uses of evaluative findings in improving college programs and services.

## Recommendations for the College

- Commit necessary time to the thoughtful definition of significant education outcomes of the community college experience.
- Develop and implement over a multi-year period a comprehensive and systematic program for assessment of institutional effectiveness, building on existing processes for performance evaluation of all employees and for program and service evaluation, and emphasizing assessment of student outcomes.
- Initiate phased implementation of student outcomes assessment, including components focusing on:
  - student educational and personal objectives
  - assessment upon college entry
  - basic skills
  - general education
  - end-of-program competencies
  - mechanisms to track performance after graduation (on the job and/or in transfer institutions)
- Develop and disseminate to high school and prospective students a statement defining "college entry-level competencies" in basic skills and general education.
- Specify and document the uses of assessment findings in efforts toward institutional improvement.

## Recommendations for the Community

Actively participate, through the College Advisory Board, program advisory committees, focus groups, and other appropriate means, in periodic initiatives to update the strategic plan and in community assessment of college effectiveness.

# VII. LEADERSHIP: ENSURING THE FUTURE

Building communities requires strong leadership both within the College and in the larger community. It also requires dynamic structures — for governing, generating resources, building broad-based participation, and creating opportunities for the growth and development of leaders. But in leadership matters, OCC must deal with paradoxical realities. It has been the beneficiary of strong college and community leadership; but at the same time it is constrained from following through on some leadership initiatives because there are different priorities at the state level. Thus, if leadership is to grow and prosper at OCC, the College must develop more explicit strategies to influence policy and funding at the state level while further developing and renewing its talent and resources at home. If it can do both, the future of the College — and by extension, the community — will be strong.

## Recommendations for the College

- Link meaningful administrative performance evaluation to professional development opportunities for administrators.
- Provide a means for Advisory Board input into evaluation of the College President.
- Design programs and allocate resources for substantive leadership development experiences to be made available to faculty, administrators, and staff.
- Strengthen leadership through the formation of a faculty senate or a similar decision-making, faculty-led group dedicated to serving the college community as a whole.

## Recommendations for the Community

- Aggressively pursue improved funding for community colleges at the state level by increasing formula funding to a comparable level with other higher education institutions in Kentucky.
- Develop a multi-faceted plan to augment funding at the local level which includes strategies for attracting special resources from corporations, foundations, and the government, as well as a strengthened, more strategic role for OCC's foundation.
- Support efforts to define and strengthen the role of the Advisory Board and establish criteria for its selection which will increase Board diversity.
- Urge the state system to honor locally planned and defined budget priorities.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Kay McClenney** is executive director of policy and programs for the Education Commission of the States. A consultant to education institutions, state systems, and professional associations in 35 states and internationally, she served for nine years as a community college educator, including experience as a faculty member, system administrator, and CEO. She recently completed terms as a member of the Board of Directors of AACJC and the Executive Board of the American Association of Women in Community and Junior Colleges. She has authored numerous publications on education issues, strategic planning, and assessment.

**Nancy Armes LeCroy** is consultant to the chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District and is currently directing a project called Innovation Exchange, which includes the Dallas system and five other colleges in the League for Innovation in the Community College. She has been involved in community college work for more than a decade, serving as executive director of the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development at the University of Texas at Austin and executive director of the AACJC Commission on the Future of Community Colleges.

**R. Jan LeCroy** is president of the Dallas Citizens Council. He guided the planning of Tarrant County Junior College's Northeast Campus and became the facility's first leader. Two years later, he assumed the presidency of Eastfield College in Dallas. Shortly thereafter, he became the vice chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District and ultimately was appointed chancellor. He has served as chair of the AACJC Board of Directors, president of the Association of Texas Colleges and Universities, member of the Board of Trustees of the Association of Graduates at West Point, president of the League for Innovation in the Community College, and chair of the Texas Academic Skills Program of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

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AACJC
American Association of Community and Junior Colleges
One Dupont Circle N.W., Suite 410
Washington, D.C. 20036-1176

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